

A N  
E X P O S I T I O N  
O N T H E  
**Old and New Testament,**

WHEREIN EACH CHAPTER IS SUMMED UP IN ITS CONTENTS;

**The Sacred Text**

*INSERTED AT LARGE IN DISTINCT PARAGRAPHS;*

Each Paragraph reduced to its proper Heads;

THE SENSE GIVEN;

AND LARGELY ILLUSTRATED WITH

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**Transactions recorded in the Sacred Writings.**

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VOL. II.

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LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

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something restrained in its style, may well enough be reckoned among them. They are books in verse, according to the ancient rules of versifying, though not according to the Greek and Latin *Prosodias*.

Some of the ancients call these five books the second Pentateuch of the Testament\*, five sacred volumes, which are the satellites to the five books of the law of Moses. Gregory Nazianzen (*carin.* 33. p. 98.) † calls these *πενταβιβλια*, the five metrical books; first Job; (so he reckons them up) then David; then the three of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, the Song, and Proverbs. *Amphilocus*, Bishop at Iconium, in his Iambic Poem to *Selenus*, reckons them up particularly, and calls them *πενταβιβλια*; *πενταβιβλια*, the five verse books. *Epiphanius*, *lib. de ponder. et mensur.* p. 533. ‡ *πενταβιβλια*. And Cyril, *Hierosol.* Collect. 4. p. (mini) 30. calls these five books *πενταβιβλια*. Polychronius in his prologue to Job saith, that as those that are without call their tragedies and comedies *ποιήματα*, so in sacred writ those books which are composed in Hebrew metre, (of which he reckons Job the first) we call *πενταβιβλια*, books in verse, written *κατὰ στιχόν*, according to order. What is written in metre, or rhythm, is so called from *μετρον* and *ῥυθμός*, because regulated by certain measures, or numbers of syllables, which please the ear with their smoothness and cadency, and so insinuate the matter the more movingly and powerfully into the fancy.

Sir William Temple ‡, in his essay upon poetry, thinks it generally agreed to have been the first sort of writing that has been used in the world, nay, that in several nations poetical compositions preceded the very invention or usage of letters. The Spaniards (he saith) found in America many strains of poetry, and such as seemed to flow from a true poetic vein, before any letters were known in those regions. The same (saith he) is probable of the Scythians and Grecians; the oracles of Apollo were delivered in verse; so were those of the Sibyls. And Tacitus saith, that the ancient Germans had no annals or records but what were in verse. Homer and Hesiod wrote their poems (the very Alcoran of the Pagan Dæmonology) many ages before the appearing of any of the Greek philosophers or historians; and long before them, (if we may give credit to the antiquities of Greece,) even before the days of David, Orpheus and Linus were celebrated Poets and musicians in Greece; and at the same time Carmenta, the mother of Evander, who was the first that introduced letters among the natives of Greece, was so called *à carmine*, because she delivered herself in verse. And in such veneration was this way of writing among the ancients that their poets were called *Vates*, prophets, and their muses were deified.

But, which is more certain and considerable, the most ancient composition that we meet with in scripture, was the songs of Moses at the Red-sea, *Exod.* xv. which we find before the very first mention of writing, for that occurs not until *Exod.* xvii. 14. when God bade Moses write a memorial of the war with Amalek. The first and indeed the true and general end of writing is the help of memory, and poetry doth in some measure answer that end, and even in the want of writing, much more with writing, helps to preserve the remembrance of ancient things. The books of *the wars of the Lord*, (*Numb.* xxi. 14.) and the book of Jasher, (*Josh.* x. 13. 2 *Sam.* i. 18.) seem to have been both written in poetic measures.

Many sacred songs we meet with in the Old Testament, scattered both in the historical and prophetic books, penned on particular occasions; which, in the opinion of very competent judges, "have in them as true and noble strains of poetry and picture as are met with in any other language whatsoever, in spite of all disadvantages from translations into different tongues, and common prose §: nay, are nobler examples of the true sublime style of poetry that can be found in Pagan writers: the images are so strong, the thoughts so great, the expressions so divine, and the figures so admirable, bold, and moving, that the wonderful manner of these writers is quite inimitable \*\*." It is fit that what is employed in the service of the sanctuary should be the best in its kind.

The books here put together are poetical, Job is an heroic poem; the books of Psalms a collection of divine odes or lyrics; Solomon's Song, a pastoral epithalamium: they are poetical, and yet sacred and serious, grave and full of majesty. They have a poetic force and daim without poetic fury and fiction, and strangely command and move the affections without corrupting the imagination or putting a cheat upon that; and, while they gratify the ear, edify the mind, and profit the more by pleasing. It is therefore much to be lamented that so powerful an art, which was at first consecrated to the honour of God, and hath been so often employed in his service, should be debauched, as it has been, and is at this day, into the service of his enemies: that his corn, and wine, and oil, should be prepared for Baal.

5. As the manner of the composition of these books is excellent and very proper to engage the attention, move the affections, and fix them in the memory, so the matter is highly useful, and such as will be every way serviceable to us. They have in them the very sum and substance of religion, and what they contain is more fitted to our hand, and made ready for use, than any part of the Old Testament; upon which account, if we may be allowed to compare one star with another in the firmament of the scripture, these will be reckoned stars of the first magnitude.

All scripture is profitable, and this part of it in a special manner, for instruction, in doctrine, in devotion, and in the right ordering of the conversation. The book of Job directs us what we are to believe concerning God; the book of Psalms, how we are to worship him, pay our homage to him, and maintain our communion with him. And then the book of Proverbs shews very particularly how we are to govern ourselves in *παντα ἀναστροφῇ*, in every turn of human life: thus shall the man of God, by a due attendance to these lights, be perfectly, thoroughly furnished for every good work. And these are placed according to their natural order as well as according to the order of man; for very fitly are we first led into the knowledge of God, our judgments rightly formed concerning him, and our mistakes rectified; and then instructed how to worship him and choose the things that please him.

We have here much of natural religion, its principles, its precepts; much of God, his infinite perfections, his relations to man, and his government both of the world and of the church: here is much of Christ, who is the spring, and soul, and center, of revealed religion, and whom both Job and David were eminent types of, and had clear and happy prospects of. We have here that which will be of use to enlighten our understanding, and to acquaint us more and more with the things of God, and the deep things of God; speculations to entertain the most contemplative, and discoveries to satisfy the most inquisitive, and increase the knowledge of those that are most knowing. Here is that also which with divine light will bring into the soul the heat and influence of a divine fire, will kindle and inflame pious and devout affections on which wings we may soar upwards, until we enter into the holiest. We may here be in a mount with God, to behold his beauty, and, when we come down from that mount, if we retain (as we ought) the impressions of our devotion upon our spirits, and make conscience of doing that which the Lord our God here requires of us, our faces shall shine before all with whom we converse, who shall take occasion from thence to glorify our father which is in heaven, *Mat.* v. 16.

Thus great, thus noble, thus truly elegant, is the subject, and thus capable of being improved; which gives me the more reason to be ashamed of the meanness of my performance, that the comment breathes so little of the life and spirit of the text. We often wonder at those that are not at all affected with the great things of God, and have no taste or relish of them, because they know little of them; but perhaps we have more reason to wonder at ourselves, that, conversing so frequently, so intimately, with them, we are not more affected with them, so as even to be wholly taken up with them, and in a continual transport of delight in the contemplation of them. We hope to be shortly in the mean time, though like the three disciples that were the witnesses of Christ's transfiguration upon the mount, we are but dull and sleepy, yet we can say, *Master it is good to be here*; here let us make tabernacles, *Luke* ix. 31, 32.

I have nothing here to boast of; nothing at all; but a great deal to be humbled for, that I have not come up to what I have aimed at, in respect of fulness and exactness: in the review of it I find many defects, and those that are critical, perhaps, will meet with some mistakes in it; but I have done it with what care I could, and desire to be thankful to God, who by his grace hath carried me on in his work thus far: let that grace have all the glory, *Phil.* ii. 13. which works in us both to will and to do whatever we will or do which is good or serves any good purpose; and what is from God I trust shall be to him, shall be graciously accepted by him, according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not, and shall be of some use to his church; and what is from myself, that is, all the defects and amisses, shall, I trust, be favourably passed by and pardoned. That prayer of St. Austin is mine; *Domine Deus, quæcunque dixi in his libris detur, agnoscat et tui: et quæ de meo, et tu ignosce et tui*.

I must beg likewise to own, to the honour of our great Master, that I have found the work to be its own wages; and that the more we converse with the word of God, the more it is to us as the honey and the honey-comb, *Psal.* xix. 10. In gathering some gleanings of this harvest for others we may feast ourselves; and, when we are enabled by the grace of God to do so, we are best qualified to feed others. I was much pleased with the passage I lately met with of Erasmus, the great scholar and celebrated wit, in an epistle dedicatory before this book, *De Ratione Concinnandi*; where, as one weary of the world and the hurry of it, he expresseth an earnest desire to spend the rest of his days in secret communion with Jesus Christ, encouraged by his gracious invitations, to those who labour and are heavy laden, to come unto him for rest, *Mat.* xi. 28. and this is that only which he thinks will yield him true satisfaction: I think his words worth transcribing, and such as deserve to be inserted among the testimonies of great men to serious godliness. *Neque quisquam facile credat quam misere animus jamdudum affecit ab his laboribus in tranquillum otium secedere, quodque superest vitæ (superest autem vix brevis palmus sive pugillus) solum cum eo solo colloqui, qui clamavit olim, (nec bodie mutat vocem suam) venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, ego reficiam vos; quandoquidem in tam turbulento, ne dicam furente, sæculo, in tot molestiis quas vel ipsa tempora publice invehunt, vel privatim adfert, stas ac valetudo, nihil reperio in quo mens mea libentius conquiescat quam in hoc arcano colloquio.* In the pleasing contemplation of the divine beauty and benignity we hope to spend a blessed eternity, and therefore in this work it is good to spend as much as may be of our time.

One volume more, containing the prophetic books, will finish the Old Testament, if the Lord continue my life and leisure, and ability of mind and body, for this work. It is begun, and I find it will be larger than any of the other volumes, and longer in the doing; but as God by his grace, shall furnish me for it and assist me in it, (without which grace I am nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing,) it shall be carried on with all convenient speed; and *sut cito, si sat bene*. I desire the prayers of my friends, that God would minister seed to the sower, and bread to the eaters, *Isa.* lv. 10. that he would multiply the seed sown, and increase the fruit of our righteousness, 2 *Cor.* ix. 10. that he who sows, and they who reap, may rejoice together, *John.* iv. 36. and the great Lord of the harvest shall have the glory of all.

\* Damascen's *Orthod. Fid.* l. iv. cap. 18.

\*\* Sir R. Blackmore's preface to Job.

† Vid. *Suicer. Thesaur.* in *εὐχαριστία*.

‡ *Miscell.* part 2.

§ Sir W. Temple, p. 329.



# A N E X P O S I T I O N, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Of the BOOK of

## J O B.

This book of Job stands by itself, is not connected with any other, and is therefore to be considered alone. Many copies of the Hebrew Bible place it after the book of Psalms, and some after the Proverbs; which, perhaps, has given occasion to some learned men to imagine it to be written by Isaiah or some of the latter prophets: But as the subject appears to have been much more ancient, so we have no reason to think but the composition of the book was, and that, therefore, it is most fully placed, first in this collection of divine morals; also, being doctrinal, it is proper to precede and introduce the book of Psalms, which is devotional, and the book of Proverbs, which is practical; for how shall we worship or obey a God we know not? As to this book; (1.) We are sure *it is given by inspiration of God, though we are not certain who was the penman of it.* The Jews, though no friends to Job, because he was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, yet as faithful conservators of the oracles of God, committed to them, always retained this book in their sacred canon. The history is referred to by one apostle, *James v. 11.* and one passage, *chap. v. 13.* quoted by another apostle, with the usual form of quoting scripture, *It is written, 1 Cor. iii. 19.* It is the opinion of many of the ancients, that this history was written by Moses himself, in Midian, and delivered to his suffering brethren in Egypt, for their support and comfort under their burdens, and the encouragement of their hope that God would in due time deliver and enrich them, as he did this patient sufferer. Some conjecture that it was written originally in Arabic and afterwards translated into Hebrew, for the use of the Jewish church, by Solomon (saith Mons. Jurieu) or some other inspired writer. It seems most probable to me that Elihu was the penman of it, at least of the discourses; because, *chap. xxxii. 15, 16.* he mingles the words of an historian with those of a disputant: but Moses, perhaps, wrote the two first chapters with the last, to give light to the discourses; for, in them, God is frequently called Jehovah, but not in all the discourses, except one, *chap. xii. 9.* and that name was but little known to the patriarchs before Moses, *Exod. vi. 3.* If Job wrote it himself, some of the Jewish writers themselves own him a prophet among the Gentiles: If Elihu, we find he had a spirit of prophecy, which filled him with matter and constrained him, *chap. xxxii. 18.*

(2.) We are sure it is, *for the substance of it, a true history, and not a romance, though the dialogues be poetical.* No doubt there was such a man as Job; the prophet Ezekiel names him with Noah, and Daniel, *Ezek. xiv. 14.* The narrative we have here of his prosperity and piety, his strange afflictions and exemplary patience, the substance of his conferences with his friends, and God's discourse with him out of the whirlwind, with his return at length to a very prosperous condition, no doubt is exactly true, though the inspired penman be allowed the usual liberty of putting the matter, of which Job and his friends discoursed, into his own words.

(2.) We are sure it is very ancient, though we cannot fix the precise time either when Job lived or when the book was written. So many, so evident are its hoary hairs, the marks of its antiquity, that we have reason to think it of equal date with the book of Genesis itself, and that holy Job was contemporary with Isaac and Jacob; though not co-heir with them of the promise of the earthly Canaan, yet a joint-expectant with them of the better country, that is, the heavenly. Probably he was of the posterity of Nahor, Abraham's brother, whose first born was Uz, *Gen. xxii. 21.* and in whose family religion was for some ages kept up, as appears, *Gen. xxxi. 53.* where God is called not only the God of Abraham, but the God of Nahor. He lived before the age of man was shortened to 70 or 80, as it was in Moses's time; before sacrifices were confined to one altar; before the general apostacy of the nations from the knowledge and worship of the true God, and while yet there was no other idolatry known but only the worship of the sun and moon, and that punished by the judges, *chap. xxxi. 26—28.* He lived while God was known by the name of God Almighty, more than by the name of Jehovah; for he is called, *Shaddai, the Almighty,* above thirty times in this book. He lived while divine knowledge was conveyed, not by writing, but by tradition, for to that appeals are here made, *chap. iii. 8.—xxi. 29.—xv. 18—v. 1.* And we have therefore reason to think he lived before Moses, because here is no mention at all of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, or the giving of the law. There is indeed one passage which might be made to allude to the drowning of Pharaoh, *chap. xxvi. 12.* *He divideth the sea with his power, and, by his understanding, he smiteth through Rahab;* which name Egypt is frequently called by in scripture, as *Psal. lxxxvii. 4.—lxxxix. 10. Isa. li. 9.* But that may as well refer to the proud waves of the sea. We conclude, therefore, that we are here got back to the patriarchal age; and, besides its authority, we receive this book with veneration for its antiquity.

(4.) We are sure it is of great use to the church, and to every good Christian, though there are many passages in it dark and hard to be understood. We cannot, perhaps, be confident of the true meaning of every Arabic word and phrase we meet with in it. It is a book that finds a great deal of work for the critics; but enough is plain to make the whole profitable, and it was all written for our learning. This noble poem presents us, in very clear and lively characters, these five things, among others: 1. *A monument of primitive theology.* The first and great principles for the light of nature, on which natural religion is founded, are here, in a warm, and long, and learned, dispute, not only taken for granted on all sides, and not the least doubt made of them, but by common consent plainly laid down as eternal truths, illustrated and urged as effecting commanding truths. Was ever the being of God, his glorious attributes and perfections, his unfearful wisdom, his irresistible power, his inconceivable glory, his inflexible justice, and his incontestible sovereignty, discoursed of with more clearness, fulness, reverence, and divine eloquence, than in this book? The creation of the world, and the government of it, are here admirably described, not as matters of nice speculation, but as laying most powerful obligations upon us to fear and serve, to submit and trust in, our Creator, Owner, Lord and Ruler. Moral good and evil, virtue and vice, were never drawn more to the life, the beauty of the one and the deformity of the other than in this book; nor the inviolable rule of God's judgments more plainly laid down, that happy are the righteous, it shall be well with them; and woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them. These are not questions of the schools, to keep the learned world in action; nor engines of state, to keep the learned world in awe: no, it appears, by this book, they are sacred truths of undoubted certainty, and which all the wise and sober part of mankind have, in every age, subscribed and submitted to. (2.) It presents us with a specimen of Gentile piety. This great saint descended either not from Abraham, but Nahor, or, if from Abraham, not from Isaac, but from one of the sons of the concubines; that were sent into the East-country, *Gen. xxv. 6.* Or, if from Isaac, yet not from Jacob but Esau; so that he was out of the pale of the covenant of peculiarity, no Israelite or proselyte, and yet none like him for religion, nor such a favourite of heaven upon this earth. It was a truth, therefore, before St. Peter perceived it, that, *in every nation, he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him, Acts v. 35.* There were children of God scattered abroad, (*John xi. 53.*) besides the incorporated children of the kingdom, *Mat. viii. 11, 12.* (3.) It presents us with an exposition of the book of providence, and a clear and satisfactory solution of many of the difficult and obscure passages of it. The prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, have always been reckoned two as hard chapters as any in that book; but they are here expounded, and reconciled with the divine wisdom, purity, and goodness, by the end of these things. (4.) It presents us with a great example of patience, and close adherence to God, in the midst of the forest calamities. Sir Richard Blackmore's most ingenious pen, in his excellent preface to his paraphrase on this book, makes Job a hero proper for an epic poem; for, (saith he,) "He appears brave in distress, and valiant in affliction; maintains his virtue, and, with that, his character, under the most exasperating provocations that the malice of hell could invent; and thereby gives a most noble example of passive fortitude; a character no way inferior to that of the active hero, &c." (5.) It presents us with an illustrious type of Christ; the particulars of which we shall endeavour to take notice of as we go along. In general, Job was a great sufferer, was emptied and humbled, but in order to his greater glory. So Christ abased himself that we might be exalted. The learned Bishop Patrick quotes St. Jerom more than once, speaking of Job as a type of Christ, who, for the joy that was set before them, endured the cross; who was persecuted for a time by men and devils, and seemed forsaken of God too, but was raised up to be an intercessor, even for his friends that had added affliction to his misery. When the apostle speaks of the patience of Job, he immediately takes notice of the end of the Lord, *i. e.* of the Lord Jesus (as some understand it) typified by Job, *James v. 11.*

In this book we have, (1.) The history of Job's sufferings, and his patience under them, *chap. i. ii.* not without a mixture of human frailty, *chap. iii.* (2.) A dispute between him and his friends upon them, in which, (1.) The opponents were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. (2.) The respondent was Job. (3.) The moderators were, (1.) Elihu, *chap. xxxii.—xxxviii.* (2.) God himself, *chap. xxxviii.—xli.* (3.) The issue of all in Job's honour and prosperity, *chap. xliii.* Upon the whole, we learn that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but when the Lord delivereth them out of all, the trial of their faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory.



and easy. He had prospered him, but in idleness or injustice, the devil could not accuse him of them; but, in the way of honest diligence, *thou hast blessed the work of his hands*; and, without that blessing, be the hands never so strong, never so skillful, the work will not prosper; but, with that, *his substance is wonderfully increased in the land*; the blessing of the Lord makes rich; Satan himself owns it.

(2.) What notice the devil took of it, and how he improved it against him. The devil speaks of it with vexation, *I see thou hast made a hedge about him, round about*; as if he had walked it round, to see if he could spy even a gap in it, for him to enter in at, to do him a mischief; but he was disappointed, it was a complete hedge. *The wicked one saw it, and was grieved*, and argued against Job, that the only reason why he served God was, because God prospered him. No thanks to him to be true to the government that prefers him, and to serve a master that pays him well.

7. The proof Satan undertakes to give of the hypocrisy and mercenary-ness of Job's religion, if he might have but leave to strip him of his wealth. Let it be put to this issue, *saith he, ver. 11. make him poor, frown upon him, turn thine hand against him, and then see where his religion will be*; touch what he hath, and it will appear what he is. *If he curses thee not to thy face, let me never be believed, but posted for a liar and false accuser. Let me perish, or be damned, if he curse thee not.* So some supply the imprecation, which the devil himself modestly concealed, but the profane swearers of our age imprudently and daringly speak out. Observe, (1.) How slightly he speaks of the affliction he desired Job might be tried with; do but touch all that he hath, do but begin with him, do but threaten to make him poor, a little cross will change his tune. (2.) How spitefully he speaks of the impression it would make upon Job. He will not only let fall his devotion, but turn it into an open defiance, not only think hardly of thee, but *even curse thee to thy face*. The word, translated curse, is *barsa*, the same that ordinarily and originally signifies to bless; but cursing God is so impious a thing, that the holy language would not admit the name: but that, where the sense requires it, it must be so understood, is plain from 1 Kings xxi. 10—13. where the word is used concerning the crime charged on Naboth, that he did blaspheme God and the king.

Now, (1.) It is likely Satan did think that Job, if impoverished, would renounce his religion, and to disprove his profession; and, if so, (as a learned gentleman has observed in his *Mount of Spirits*;) Satan had made out his own universal empire among the children of men. God declared Job the best man then living. Now if Satan can prove him a hypocrite, it will follow that God had not one faithful servant among men, and that there was no such thing as true and sincere piety in the world; but religion was all a sham, and Satan was king, *de facto*, over all mankind. But it appeared, that *the Lord knows them that are his*, and is not deceived in any. (2.) However, if Job should retain his religion, Satan would have the satisfaction to see him sorely afflicted: he hates good men, and delights in their griefs, as God has pleasure in their prosperity.

8. The permission God gave to Satan to afflict Job for the trial of his sincerity. Satan desired God to do it. *Put forth thy hand now.* God allowed him to do it, *ver. 12. All that he hath is in thine hand, make the trial as thou wilt, do thy worst at him.* Now, (1.) It is matter of wonder that God should give Satan such a permission as this, should deliver the soul of his turtle-dove into the hand of the adversary, such a lamb to such a lion: but he did it for his own glory, the honour of Job, the explanation of providence, and the encouragement of his afflicted people in all ages; to make a case, which, being adjudged, might be a useful precedent. He suffered Job to be tried, as he suffered Peter to be lifted, but took care his faith should not fail, Luke xxii. 32. and then trial of it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7. But, (2.) It is matter of comfort that God has the devil in a chain, Rev. xx. 1. He could not afflict Job without leave from God first asked and obtained; and then no farther than he had leave, *only upon himself put not forth thine hand*; meddle not with his body, but only with his estate. It is a limited power that the devil hath; he hath no power to debauch men but what they give him themselves, nor power to afflict men but what is given him from above.

Lastly, Satan's departure from this meeting of the sons of God: before they broke up, Satan went forth (as Cain, Gen. iv. 16.) from the presence of the Lord; no longer detained before him (as Doeg was, 1 Sam. xxi. 7.) than until he had accomplished his malicious purpose. He went forth, (1.) Glad that he had gained his point; proud of the permission he had to do mischief to a good man; and (2.) Resolved to lose no time, but speedily to put his project in execution: he went forth now not to go to and fro, rambling through the earth, but with a direct course to fall upon poor Job, who is carefully going on in the way of his duty, and knows nothing of the matter. What passeth between good and bad spirits concerning us we are not aware.

13. ¶ And there was a day, when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 14. And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them: 15. And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 17. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away; yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 19. And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

We have here a particular account of Job's troubles: (1.) Satan brought them upon him on the very day that his children began their course of feasting, at their eldest brother's house, ver. 19. where he having (we may

suppose) the double portion, the entertainment was the most rich and plentiful. The whole family, no doubt, was in perfect repose, and all were easy, and under no apprehension of trouble, now when they revived this custom; and this time Satan chose, that the trouble coming now might be the more grievous: *the night of my pleasure has he turned into fear.*

(2.) They all come upon him at once; while one messenger of the evil tidings was speaking another came; and, before he had told his story, a third; and a fourth followed immediately. Thus Satan, by the divine permission, ordered it, (1.) That there might appear a more than ordinary displeasure of God against him in his troubles, and by that he might be exasperated against the Divine Providence, and if it were resolved, right or wrong, to ruin him, and not give him time to speak for himself. (2.) That he might not have leisure to consider and recollect himself, and reason himself unto a gracious submission, but might be overwhelmed and overpowered by a complication of calamities. If he have not room to pause a little, he will be apt to speak in haste, and then, if ever, he will curse his God. Note, The children of God are often in heaviness, through manifold temptations: deep calls to deep, waves and billows, one upon the neck of another. Let one affliction therefore quicken and help us to prepare for another; for, how deep soever we have drunk of the bitter cup, as long as we are in this world we cannot be sure that we have drunk our share, and that it will finally pass from us. (3.) They took from him all that he had, and made a full end of his enjoyments. The detail of his losses answers to the foregoing inventory of his possessions.

1. He had five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a competent number of servants to attend them; and all those he lost at once, ver. 14, 15. The account he has of this lets him know, (1.) that it was not through any carelessness of his servants, for then his resentment might have spent itself upon them: *The oxen were ploughing*, not playing, and the asses not suffered to stray, and so taken up waits, but feeding beside them, under the servant's eye, each in their place; and they that asked by, we may suppose, blessed them, and said, *God speed the plough*. Note, All our prudence, care, and diligence, cannot secure us from affliction; no, not for those afflictions which are commonly owing to imprudence and negligence, *Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman, though never so wakeful wakes but in vain*: yet it is some comfort, under a trouble, if it found us in the way of our duty, and not in any by-path. (2.) That it was through the wickedness of his neighbours, the Sabeans, a sort of rapparees perhaps that lived by spoil and plunder, they carried off the oxen and asses, and slew the servants that faithfully and bravely did their best to defend them; and one only escaped, not in kindness to him or his master, but that Job might have the certain intelligence of it by an eye-witness, before he heard it by a flying report; which would have brought it upon him gradually. We have no reason to suspect that either Job or his servants had given any provocation to these Sabeans to make this inroad, but Satan put it into their hearts to do it, to do it now, and so gained a double point; for he made both Job to suffer and them to sin. Note, When Satan has God's permission to do mischief he will not want mischievous men to be his instruments in doing it, for he is a spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

2. He had seven thousand sheep, and shepherds that kept them, and all those he lost at the same time by lightning, ver. 16. Job was perhaps in his own mind ready to reproach the Sabeans, and fly out against them for their injustice and cruelty, when the next news immediately directs him to look upward. *The fire of God is fallen from heaven.* As thunder in his voice, so lightning is his fire: but this was such an extraordinary lightning, and levelled so directly against Job, that all his sheep, and she, herds were not only killed, but consumed by it at once, and one shepherd only left alive to carry the news to poor Job. The Devil, aiming to make him curse God and renounce his religion, managed this part of the trial very artfully in order thereunto. (1.) His sheep, with which especially he used to honour God in sacrifice, were all taken from him, as if God was angry at his offerings, and would punish him in these very things which he had employed in his service. Having misrepresented Job to God as a false servant, in pursuance of his old design to set heaven and earth at variance, he here misrepresents God to Job as a hard master, who would not protect those flocks, out of which he had had so many burnt-offerings; this would tempt Job to say, *it is vain to serve God*. (2.) The messenger called the lightning the fire of God, and innocently enough; but perhaps Satan thereby designed to strike into his mind this thought, that God was turned to be his enemy, and fought against him; which was much more grievous to him than all the insults of the Sabeans. He owns, chap. xxxi. 23. that destruction from God was a terror to him. How terrible then were the tidings of this destruction, which came immediately from the hand of God! Had the fire from heaven consumed the sheep upon the altar, he might have construed it a token of God's favour; but, consuming them in the pasture, he could not but look upon it as a token of God's displeasure: there had not been the like since Sodom was buried.

3. He had three thousand camels, and servants tending them, and he lost them all at the same time by the Chaldeans; who came in three bands, and drove them away, and slew the servants, ver. 17. If the fire of God, which fell upon Job's honest servants, that were in the way of their duty, had fallen upon the Sabeans and Chaldean robbers that were doing mischief, God's judgments therein would have been, like the great mountains, evident and conspicuous; but, when the way of the wicked prospers, and they carry off their booty; when just and good men are suddenly cut off: God's righteousness is like the great deep, the bottom of which we cannot find, Psal. xxvi. 6.

4. His dearest and most valuable possessions were his ten children; and, to conclude the tragedy, news is brought him at the same time that they were killed, and buried in the ruins of the house in which they were feasting, and all the servants that waited on them, except one that came express with the tidings of it, ver. 18, 19. This was the greatest of Job's losses, and which could not but go nearest him, and therefore the devil reserved it for the last; that, if the other provocations failed, this might make him curse God. Our children are pieces of ourselves, it is very hard to part with them, and touches a good man in as tender a part as any other. But, to part with them all at once, and for them to be cut off in a moment, who had been so many years his cares and hopes, went to the quick indeed. (1.) They all died together, and not one of them was left alive. David though a wife and good man, was put very much off the hinges by the death of one son: how hard then did it bear upon poor Job, who lost them all, and in one moment was written childless? (2.) They died suddenly. Had they been taken away by some lingering disease, he had had notice to expect their death, and prepare for the breach; but this came upon him without giving him any warning. (3.) They died when they were feasting and making merry: had they died suddenly, when they were praying, he might the better have borne it: he would have hoped that death had found them in a good frame, if their blood had been mingled with their sacrifices; but, to have it mingled with the feast, where he himself used to be jealous of them, that they had *sinued and cursed God in their hearts*, to have that



that day come upon them unawares, like a thief in the night, when perhaps their heads were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; this could not but add much to his grief, considering what a tender concern he always had for his children's souls, and that they were now out of the reach of the sacrifices he used to offer, according to the number of them all. See how all things came alike to all. Job's children were constantly prayed for by their father, and lived in love one with another, and yet came to this untimely end. (4.) They died by a wind of the devil's raising, who is the prince of the power of the air, Eph. ii. 2. But which was looked upon to be an immediate hand of God, and a token of his wrath. So Bildad construed it, chap. viii. 1. *They children have sinned against him, and he has cast them away in their transgression.* (5.) They were taken away when he had most need of them, to comfort him under all his other losses. Such miserable comforters are all creatures; in God only we have a present help at all times.

20. Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped. 21. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. 22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

The devil had done all he desired leave to do against Job to provoke him to curse God, had touched all he had, touched it with a witness; he, whom the rising sun saw as the richest, of all the men in the east, before night was poor to a proverb. If his riches had been, as Satan insinuated, the only principle of his religion, now he had lost his riches he had certainly lost his religion: but the account we have in these verses, of his pious deportment under his affliction, sufficiently proved the devil a liar and Job an honest man.

1. He carried himself like a man under his afflictions; not stupid and senseless, like a stock or stone; not unnatural and unaffected at the death of his children and servants; no, ver. 20. *He arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head*, which were the usual expressions of great sorrow, to shew that he was sensible of the hand of the Lord that was gone out against him; yet he did not break out into any indecencies, nor discover any extravagant passion, he did not faint away, but arose, as a champion, to the combat; did not, in a heat throw off his clothes, but very gravely, in conformity to the custom of the country, rent his mantle, his cloak, or outer garment, did not passionately tear his hair, but deliberately shaved his head: by all which it appeared that he kept his temper, and bravely maintained the possession and repose of his own soul, in the midst of all these provocations. It is observable when he began to shew his resentment, not till he heard of the death of his children; and then he arose, then he rent his mantle. A worldly unbelieving heart would have said, now the meat is gone, it is well the mouths are gone too; now there are no portions, it is well there are no children: but Job knew better things, and would have been thankful if Providence had spared his children, though he had little or nothing for them; for *Jehovah-Jirah, the Lord will provide*. Some expositors, remembering that it was usual with the Jews to rend their clothes when they heard blasphemy, conjecture that Job rent his clothes, in a holy indignation, at the blasphemous thoughts which Satan now cast into his mind, tempting him to curse God.

2. He carried himself like a wife and good man under his affliction; like a perfect and an upright man, and one that feared God, and eschewed the evil of sin more than that of outward trouble.

1. He humbled himself under the hand of God, and accommodated himself to the providences he was under, as one that knew how to want as well as how to abound. When God called to weeping and mourning, he wept and mourned, *rent his mantle, and shaved his head*; and, as one that abased himself even to the dust before God, he *fell down upon the ground*, in a penitent sense of sin, and a patient submission to the will of God, *accepting the punishment of his iniquity*. Hereby he shewed his sincerity; for hypocrites cry not when God binds them, Job xxxvi. 13. Hereby he disposed himself to get good by the affliction; for how can we improve the grief we will not feel?

2. He composed himself with quieting considerations, that he might not be disturbed, and put out of the possession of his own soul by these events: he reasons from the common state of human life, which he describes with application to himself: *Naked came I (as others do) out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither*, into the lap of our common mothers, the earth, as the child, when it is sick or weary, lays its head in its mother's bosom. *Dust we were in our original, and to dust we return in our exit*, Gen. iii. 19. *So the earth as we were*, Eccl. xii. 7. *naked shall we return thither*, whence we were taken, viz. to the clay, Job xxxiii. 6. St. Paul refers to this of Job, 1 Tim. vi. 7. *We brought nothing of this world's goods into the world, but have them from others; and it is certain we can carry nothing out, but must leave them for others*. We come into the world naked, not only unarmed, but unclothed, helpless, shiftless; not so well covered and fenced as other creatures: the sin we are born in makes us naked to our shame in the eyes of the holy God. We go out of the world naked; the body doth, though the sanctified soul goes clothed, 2 Cor. v. 3. Death strips us of all our enjoyments; clothing can neither warm nor adorn a dead body. This consideration silenced Job under all his losses. (1.) He is but where he was at first; he looks upon himself but as naked, not maimed, not wounded; he was himself still his own man, when nothing else was his own; and therefore but reduced to his first condition. *Nemo tam pauper, esse quam natus est. Min. Felix.* If we are impoverished, we are not wronged, nor much hurt; for we are but as we were born. (2.) He is but where he must have been at last, and it only unclothed, or unloaded rather, a little sooner than he expected. If we put off our clothes before we go to bed, it is some inconvenience; but it may be the better borne when it is near bed time.

3. He gave glory to God, and expressed himself upon this occasion with a great veneration for the Divine Providence, and an awful submission to the disposals of it; and we may well rejoice to find Job in this good frame, because this was the very thing upon which the trial of his integrity was put, though he did not know it. The devil said he would, under his affliction, curse God; but he blessed him, and so proved himself an honest man.

1. He acknowledged the hand of God both in the mercies he had formerly enjoyed and in the affliction he was now exercised with: *The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away*. We must own the Divine Providence, (1.) In all our comforts. God gave us our being, made us, and not we ourselves; gave us our wealth: it was not our own ingenuity or industry that enriched us, but God's blessing on our cares and endeavours; he gave us power to get wealth; not only made the creatures for us, but bestowed upon us our share. (2.) In all our crosses. The same that gave hath taken away; and may he not do what he will with his own? See how he looks above in-

struments, and keeps his eye upon the first cause: he doth not say, the Lord gave, and the Sabaeans and Chaldeans have taken away; God made me rich, and the devil has made me poor: but he that gave has taken; and for that reason he is dumb, and has nothing to say, because God did it: he that gave all may take which and when, how and how much, he pleaseth. Seneca could argue thus; *Abtulit, sed et dedit*; and Epictetus excellently, (cap. xv.) when thou art deprived of any comfort; suppose a child taken away by death, or a part of thy estate lost; say not *ἀπώλεται ἄνθρωπος*, but *ἀπώλεται*: not I have lost it, but I have restored it, and returned it to the right owner; but thou wilt object, (saith he,) he is an ill man that has robbed me (*κακός ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὅστις ἄρειον ἔχει*). To which he answers, What is it to thee (*τί σε σοὶ μὴ ἀνέη*) by what hand he that gives remands what he gave?

2. He adores God in both. When all was gone, he fell down and worshipped. Note, Afflictions must not divert us from, but quicken us to, the exercises of religion. Weeping must not hinder sowing, not hinder worshipping. He eyed not only the hand of God, but the name of God, in his afflictions, and gave glory to that; *blessed be the name of the Lord*. He hath still the same great and good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them forth to his praise, and can find in his heart to bless God, even when he takes away, as well as when he gives. Thus must we sing both of mercy and judgment, Psal. ci. 1. (1.) He bleisseth God for what was given, though now it was taken away: when our comforts are removed from us, we must thank God that ever we had them, and had them so much longer than we deserved. Nay, (2.) He adores God, even in taking away, and gives him honour by a willing submission; nay, he gives him thanks for good designed him by his afflictions, and gracious support under his afflictions, and the believing hopes he had of a happy issue at last.

Lastly, Here is the honourable testimony which the Holy Ghost gives to Job's constancy and good carriage under his afflictions: He patied his trials with applause, ver. 22. In all this Job did not miss it, for he did not attribute folly to God, nor in the least reflect upon his wisdom in what he had done. Discontent and impatience do in effect charge God with folly. Against the workings of these therefore Job carefully watched, and so must we, acknowledging that as God had done right but we have done wickedly, so God had done wisely but we have done foolishly, very foolishly. They, who not only keep their temper under crosses and provocations, but keep up good thoughts of God and sweet communion with him, whether their praise be of men or not, it will be of God, as Job's here was.

## C H A P. II.

*We left Job honourably acquitted, upon a fair trial between God and Satan concerning him: Satan had leave to touch, to touch and take all he had, and was confident he would then curse God to his face; but, on the contrary, he blessed him, and so was proved an honest man, and Satan a false accuser. Now, one would have thought this would have been conclusive, and that Job should never have had his reputation called in question again: but Job is known to be armour of proof, and therefore is here set up for a mark, and brought upon his trial a second time. (1.) Satan moved for another trial, which should touch his bone and his flesh, ver. 1-5. (2.) God, for holy ends, permits it, ver. 6. (3.) Satan smites him with a very painful and lothesome disease, ver. 7, 8. (4.) His wife tempts him to curse God, but he resists the temptation, ver. 9, 10. (5.) His friends come to condole him, and to comfort him, ver. 11-13. And, in this, that good man is set forth for an example of suffering affliction and of patience.*

1. **A** GAIN there was a day, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2. And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 3. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdest fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. 4. And Satan answered the LORD and said, Skin for skin; yea all that a man hath will he give for his life. 5. But, put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life.

Satan, that sworn enemy to God and to all good men, is here pushing forward his malicious prosecution of Job, whom he hated because God loved him, and did all he could to separate between him and his God, to sow discord, and make mischief between them, urging God to afflict, and then urging him to blaspheme God. One would have thought he had had enough of his former attempt upon Job, in which he was so shamefully baffled and disappointed, but malice is restless; the devil and his instruments are so; they that calumniate good people, and accuse them falsely, will have their saying, though the evidence to the contrary be never so plain and full, and they have been cast in the issue which they themselves have put it upon. Satan will have Job's cause called over again: the malicious, unreasonable, importunity of that great persecutor of the saints is represented, Rev. xii. 10. by his accusing them before our God, day and night still repeating and urging that against them which has been many a time answered; so did Satan here accuse Job day after day. Here is,

1. The court set, and the prosecutor, or accuser, making his appearance, ver. 1, 2. as before, chap. i. 6, 7. The angels attended God's throne, and Satan among them; one would have expected him to come and confess his malice against Job, and his mistake concerning him, to cry *peccavi*, for belying one whom God spoke well of, and to beg pardon; but, instead of that, he comes with a farther design against Job. He is asked the same question as before, *whence comest thou?* and answers as before, *from going to and fro in the earth*; as if he had been doing no harm, though he had been abusing that good man.

2. The judge himself of counsel for the accused, and pleading for him ver. 3. *Hast thou considered my servant Job better than thou didst, and art thou now at length convinced that he is a faithful servant of mine, a perfect and an upright man*: for thou seest he still holds fast his integrity? This



is now added to his character, as a farther achievement; instead of letting go his religion, and cursing God, he holds it faster than ever, as that which he has now more than ordinary occasion for: he is the same in adversity that he was in prosperity, and rather better, and more hearty and lively in blessing God than ever he was, and takes root the faster for being thus shaken. See (1.) How Satan is condemned for his allegations against Job: *Thou movedst me against him, as an accuser, to destroy him without a cause.* Or, thou in vain movedst me to destroy him, but I will never do that: good men, when they are *cast down*, are not *destroyed*, 2 Cor. iv. 9. How well it is for us, that neither men or devils are to be our judges; for perhaps they would destroy us right or wrong; but our judgment proceedeth from the Lord, whose judgment never errs or is biased. (2.) How Job is commended for his constancy, notwithstanding the attacks made upon him; still he holds fast his integrity as his weapon, and thou canst not disarm him; as his treasure, and thou canst not rob him of that; nay, thine endeavours to do it make him hold it the faster: instead of losing ground by the temptations he gets ground. God speaks of it with wonder, and pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of his own grace; *still he holds fast his integrity.* Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his praise and honour, 1 Pet. i. 7. Constancy crowns integrity.

3. The accusation farther prosecuted, *ver. 4.* What excuse can Satan make for the successfulness of his former attempt? What can he say to palliate it, when he had been so very confident he should gain his point? Why, truly, he has this to say, *Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life.* Something of truth there is in this, that self-love and self-preservation are very powerful commanding principles in the hearts of men. Men love themselves better than their nearest relations, even their children, that are pieces of themselves, and will not only venture, but give, their estates to save their lives. All account life sweet and precious, and, while they are themselves in health and at ease, they can keep trouble from their hearts, whatever they lose. And we ought to make a good use of this consideration; and, while God continues to us our life and health, and the use of our limbs and senses, we should the more patiently bear the loss of other comforts. See *Matt. vi. 25.*

But Satan grounds upon this an accusation of Job, sily representing him (1.) As unnatural to those about him, and one that laid not to heart the death of his children and servants, not cared how many of them had their skins (as I may say) stripped over their ears so long as he slept in a whole skin himself. As if he, that was so tender of his children's souls, could be careless of their bodies; and, like the ostrich hardened against his young ones as though they were not his. (2.) As wholly selfish, and minding nothing but his own ease and safety; as if his religion made him sour, and morose, and ill-natured. Thus are the ways and people of God often misrepresented by the devil and his agents.

4. A challenge given to make a farther trial of Job's integrity, *ver. 5.* *Put forth thine hand now* (for I find my hand too short to reach him and too weak to hurt him) *and touch his bone and his flesh,* (that is, with him, the only tender part, *make him sick with smiting him,* Mich. vi. 13.) and then, I dare say, *he will curse thee to thy face,* and let go his integrity. Satan knew it, and we find by experience, that nothing is more likely to ruffle the thoughts, and put the mind into disorder, than acute pain and distemper of body. There is no disputing against sense. St. Paul himself had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have borne it without special grace from Christ, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.

5. A permission granted to Satan to make this trial, *ver. 6.* Satan would have God put forth his hand and do it, but he *afflicts not willingly*, nor takes any pleasure in *grieving the children of men*, much less his own children, *Lam. iii. 33.* And therefore, if it must be done, let Satan do it, who delights in such work; *he is in thine hand*, do thy worst at him; but, with a proviso and limitation, *only save his life*, or his soul. Afflict him, but not to death. Satan hunted for precious life; would have taken that, if he might, in hopes that dying agonies would have forced Job to curse his God; but God had mercy in store for Job after this trial, and therefore he must survive it; and however he is afflicted, must have his life given him for a prey. If God did not chain up the roaring lion, how soon he would devour us! As far as he permits the wrath of Satan, and wicked men to proceed against his people, he will make it return to his praise and theirs. And the remainder thereof he will restrain, *Psal. lxxvi. 10.* Save his soul, i. e. his reason, to some: preserve to him the use of that: for, otherwise, it will be no fair trial: if, in his delirium, he should curse God, that will be no disproof of his integrity. It would not be the language of his heart but of his distemper.

Job, in being thus maligned by Satan, was a type of Christ: the first prophecy of whom was, that Satan should *bruise his heel*, Gen. iii. 15. and so he was foiled, as in Job's case. Satan tempted him to let go his integrity; his adoption, *Mat. iv. 4.* *if thou be the son of God.* He entered into the heart of Judas, that betrayed Christ, and (some think) with his terrors put Christ into his agony: he had permission to touch his bone and his flesh, without exception of his life; because, by dying, he was to do that which Job could not do, *destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil.*

7. ¶ So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore biles, from the sole of his foot unto his crown. 8. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. 9. ¶ Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. 10. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh: what? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

The devil, having got leave to tear and worry poor Job, presently fell to work with him; as a tormentor first, and then a tempter: his own children he tempts first, and draws them to sin, and afterwards torments, when thereby he has brought them to ruin; but this child of God he tormented with affliction, and then tempted to make an ill use of his affliction. That which he aimed at was to make Job curse God: now here we are told what course he took both to move him to it and move it to him; both to give him the provocation, else it would be to no purpose to urge him to it, and to give him the information, else he would not have thought of it: thus artfully is the temptation managed with all the subtilty of the old serpent, who is here playing the same game against Job that he played against our first parents, *Gen. iii.* aiming to seduce him from his allegiance to his God, and to rob him of his integrity.

1. He provokes him to curse God, by smiting him with sore biles, and so making him a burden to himself, *ver. 7; 8.* The former attack was ex-

tremely violent, but Job kept his ground, bravely made good the pass, and carried the day; yet he is still but girding on the harness, there is worse behind; the clouds return after the rain; Satan, by the divine permission, follows his blow, and now deep calls unto deep.

(1.) The disease was very grievous with which Job was seized: Satan *smote him with biles, sore biles*, all over him from head to foot; with an evil inflammation, so some render it: an erysipelas perhaps in a higher degree. One bile, when it is gathering, is torment enough, and gives a man abundance of pain and uneasiness. What a condition was Job then in, that had biles all over him, and no part free, and those of as raging a heat as the devil could make them; and, as it were, *set on fire of hell!* The small pox is a very grievous and painful disease, and would be much more terrible than it is, but that we know the extremity of it ordinarily lasts but a few days; how grievous then was Job's disease, who was smitten all over him, not with pocks, (or poulks, as we call them,) but with sore biles, or grievous ulcers, which made him sick at heart, put him to exquisite torture; and, being overspread with them, he could lay himself no way for any ease. If, at any time, we be exercised with sore and grievous distempers, let us not think ourselves dealt with any otherwise than as God has sometimes dealt with the best of his saints and servants. We know not how much Satan may have a hand (by divine permission) in the diseases which the children of men, and especially the children of God, are afflicted, what infections that prince of the air may spread, what inflammations may come from that fiery serpent. We read of one whom Satan had bound many years. *Luke xiii. 16.* Should God suffer that roaring lion to have his will against any of us, how miserable would he soon make us!

(2.) His management of himself in this distemper was very strange, *ver. 8.* (1.) Instead of healing salves he took a potsherd, a piece of broken pitcher, to *scrape himself withal*: a very sad pass this poor man was come to. When a man is sick and sore he may bear it the better if he be well tended and carefully looked after: many rich people have, with a soft and tender hand, charitably ministered to the poor in such a condition as this; even Lazarus had some ease from the tongues of the dogs that came and *licked his sores*; but poor Job had no help afforded him. (1.) Nothing is done at his sores but what he doth himself with his own hands: His children and servants are all dead, his wife unkind, *chap. xix. 17.* He has not wherewithal to see a physician or surgeon, and (which is most sad of all) none of those he had formerly been kind to, had so much sense of honour and gratitude, as to minister to him in his distress, and lend him a hand to dress or wipe his running sores, either because the disease was loathsome and noisome, or because they apprehended it infectious. Thus it was in the former days, as it will be in the last days: men were *lovers of their own selves, unthankful, and without natural affection.* (2.) Nothing is done at his sores but only to *scrape them*: they are not bound up with soft rags, nor mollified with ointment, nor washed nor kept clean, no healing plasters laid on them, no opiates, no anodynes, ministered to the poor patient, to alleviate the pain and compose him to rest, nor any cordials to support his spirits; all the operation is the scraping his ulcers; which, when they were come to a head, and began to die, made his body all over like scurf, as is usual in the end of the small-pox. It would have been an endless thing to dress his biles one by one; he therefore resolves to do it by wholesale: a remedy which one would think as bad as the disease. (3.) He has nothing to do this with but a potsherd; no surgeons' instruments proper for the purpose, but that which would rather rake into his wounds, and add to his pain than give him any ease. People that are sick and sore have need to be under the discipline and direction of others; for, many times, they are but ill managers of themselves.

(3.) Instead of reposing himself in a soft and warm bed, he *sat down among ashes*. Probably he had a bed left him; for though his fields were stripped, we do not find that his house was burnt or plundered, but he chose to sit in the ashes; either because he was weary of his bed, or because he would put himself into the place and posture of a penitent; who, in token of his self-abbhorrence, lay in dust and ashes, *chap. xliii. 6. Isa. lvii. 5. Jonah iii. 6.* Thus did he humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and bring his mind to the meanness and poverty of his condition. He complains, *chap. vii. 5.* that his flesh was *clothed with worms, and clods of dust*, and therefore *dust to dust, ashes to ashes*. If God lay him among the ashes, there he will contentedly sit down: a low spirit becomes low circumstances, and will help to reconcile us to them. The Septuagint reads it, *he sat down upon a dunghill without the city*, which is commonly said in mentioning this story, but the original saith no more, but that he *sat in the midst of the ashes*, which he might do in his own house.

2. He puts him in the head to curse God, by the persuasions of his own wife, *ver. 9.* The Jews, who covet much to be wise above what is written, say that Job's wife was Dinah Jacob's daughter: so the Chaldee paraphrase. It is not likely she was; but, whoever it was, she was to him like Michal to David, a scoffer to his piety. She was spared to him, when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose, to be a troubler and tempter to him. If Satan leave any thing that he has permission to take away, it is with a design of mischief. It is policy to fend his temptations by the hand of those that are near us, as he tempted Adam by Eve, and Christ by Peter. We must therefore carefully watch that we be not drawn to say or do any ill thing by the influence, interest, or intreaty of any; no, not those for whose opinion and favour we have never so great a value. Observe how strong this temptation was.

1. She banters Job for his constancy in his religion, *Dost thou still retain thine integrity?* Art thou so very obstinate in thy religion that nothing will cure thee of it? So tame and sheepish as thus to truckle to a God, that is so far from rewarding thy services with marks of his favour, that he seems to take a pleasure in making thee miserable, strips thee and whips thee without any provocation given? Is this a God to be still loved, and blessed, and served?

*Dost thou not see that thy devotion's vain?  
What have thy prayers procur'd but woe and pain?  
Hast thou not yet thine interest understood?  
Perverfly righteous and absurdly good?  
Those painful sores, and all thy losses, show,  
How Heaven regards the foolish saint below:  
Incorrigibly pious! can't thy God  
Reform thy stupid virtue with his rod?*

Sir R. BLACKMORE.

Thus Satan still endeavours to draw men from God as he did our first parents, by suggesting hard thoughts of him, as one that envies the happiness and delights in the misery of his creatures, than which nothing is more false. Another artifice he useth, is to drive men from their religion by loading them with scoffs and reproaches for their adherence to it: we have reason to expect it, but we are fools if we heed it: our Master himself has undergone it, we shall be abundantly recompensed for it, and with much more reason we may retort it upon the scoffers. Are ye such fools as still to retain your impiety, when you might *bless God and live*? 2. She



2. She urgeth him to renounce his religion, to blaspheme God, set him at defiance, and dare him to do his worst, *curse God and die*; live no longer in dependence upon God, wait not for relief from him, but be thine own deliverer by being thine own executioner, end thy troubles by ending thy life, better die once than be always dying thus; thou mayest now despair of having any help from thy God, even curse him and hang thyself. These are two of the blackest and most horrid of all Satan's temptations, and yet such as good men have sometimes been violently assaulted with: nothing more contrary to natural conscience than blaspheming God, nor to natural sense than self-murder; therefore the suggestion of either of these may well be suspected to come immediately from Satan: Lord lead us not into temptation, not into such, not into any temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

3. He bravely resists and overcomes the temptation, *ver. 10*. He soon gave her an answer, (for Satan spared him the use of his tongue, in hopes he would curse God with it,) which shewed his constant resolution to cleave to God, to keep his good thoughts of him, and not to let go his integrity.

See, 1. How he resented the temptations; he took it very heinously to have such a thing mentioned to him; what? curse God? I abhor the thought of it; *get thee behind me, Satan*. In other cases Job reasoned with his wife with a great deal of mildness, even when she was unkind to him, *chap. xix. 17*. *I entreated her for the children's sake of my own body*. But, when he persuaded him to curse God, he was much displeased: *thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh*. He doth not call her a fool, and an atheist, nor break out into any indecent expressions of his displeasure, as those who are sick and sore are apt to do and think they may be excused; but he shews her the evil of what she said, that she spoke the language of the infidels and idolaters, who, when they are *hardly bested, fret themselves and curse their king, and their God*. *Isa. viii. 21*. We have reason to suppose in such a pious household as Job had, his wife was one that had been well-affected to religion, yet now, when all their estate and comforts are gone, she could not bear the loss with that temper of mind that Job had: but, that she could go about to infect his mind with the distemper of hers, was a great provocation to him, and he could not forbear thus shewing his resentment. Note, 1. Those are angry and sin not that are only angry at sin, and take a temptation as the greatest affront; who cannot bear them that are evil, *Rev. ii. 2*. When Peter was a sinner to Christ, he told him plainly, *Thou art an offence to me*. 2. If those, that we think wise and good, at any time speak that which is foolish and bad, we ought to reprove them faithfully for it, and shew them the evil of what they say, that we suffer not sin upon them. 3. Temptations to curse God ought to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence, and not so much to be parleyed with: whoever persuades us to that must be looked upon as our enemy, to whom, if we yield, it is at our peril. Job did not curse God, and then think to come off with Adam's excuse, *the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she persuaded me to it*, *Gen. iii. 12*, which had in it a tacit reflection on God, his ordinance and providence; no, if thou scornest, if thou curstest, thou alone shalt bear it.

2. How he reasoned against the temptation. *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?* Those whom we reprove we must endeavour to convince, and it is no hard matter to give a reason why we should still hold fast our integrity, even when we are stripped of every thing else. He considers, that, though good and evil are contraries, yet they do not come from contrary causes, but both from the hand of God, *Isa. xlv. 7*. *Lam. iii. 37*, and therefore in both we must have our eye unto him, with thankfulness for the good he sends, and without fretfulness at the evil. Observe the force of his argument.

(1.) What he argues for, not only the bearing, but the receiving, of evil. *Shall we not receive evil, i. e.* (1.) Shall we not expect to receive it? If God gives us so many good things, shall we be surprised, or think it strange, if he sometimes afflict us, when he has told us that prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other? *Pet. iv. 12*. (2.) Shall we not address ourselves to receive it right? the word signifies to receive as a gift, and notes a pious affection and disposition of soul under our afflictions, neither despising them nor fainting under them, accounting them gifts, *Phil. i. 29*, accepting them as punishments of their iniquity, *Lev. xxvi. 41*, acquiescing in the will of God in them, let him do with me as seemeth him good, and accommodating ourselves to them, as those that know how to want as well as how to abound, *Phil. iv. 12*. When the heart is humbled, and weaned, by humbling weaning providences, then we receive correction, *Zech. iii. 2*, and take up our cross.

(2.) What he argues from: Shall we receive so much good as has come to us from the hand of God, during all those years of peace and prosperity that we have lived, and shall we not now receive evil, when God thinks fit to lay it on us? Note, The consideration of the mercies we receive from God, both past and present, should make us receive our afflictions with a suitable disposition of spirit. If we receive our share of the common good in the seven years of plenty, shall we not receive our share of the common evil in the years of famine? *Qui sentit commodum sentire debet et onus*. If we have so much that pleaseth us, why should we not be content with that which pleaseth God? If we receive so many comforts, shall we not receive some affliction, which will serve as foils to our comforts, to make them the more valuable? We are taught the worth of mercies by being made to want them sometimes; and as allays to our comforts, to make them the less dangerous to keep the balance even, and to prevent our being *lifted up above measure*, *2 Cor. xii. 7*. If we receive so much good for the body, shall we not receive some good for the soul? That is, some afflictions, by which we partake of God's holiness, *Heb. xii. 10*. Something which, by saddening the countenance, makes the heart better. Let murmuring therefore, as well as boasting, be for ever excluded.

4. Thus in a good measure Job still held fast his integrity, and Satan's design against him was defeated. *In all this did not Job sin with his lips*; he not only said this well, but all he said at this time was under the government of religion and right reason: in the midst of all these grievances he did not speak a word amiss; and we have no reason to think but that he also preserved a good temper of mind, so that though there might be some stirrings and risings of corruption in his heart, yet grace got the upper hand, and he took care that the root of bitterness might not spring up to trouble him, *Heb. xii. 15*. The abundance of his heart was for God, produced good things, and suppressed the evil that was there, which was out-voted by the better side. If he did think any evil, yet he laid his hand upon his mouth, (*Prov. xxx. 32*) stifled the evil thought, and let it go no farther; by which it appeared not only that he had true grace, but that it was strong and victorious; in short, that he had not forfeited the character of a perfect and upright man, for so he appears to be, who, in the midst of such temptation, *offends not in word*, *Jam. iii. 2*, *Psal. xvii. 3*.

11. Now, when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bil-

dad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite; for they had made an appointment together, to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him. 12. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice and wept, and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. 13. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

We have here an account of the kind visit which Job's three friends made him in his affliction. The news of his extraordinary troubles spread into all parts, he being an eminent man, both for greatness and goodness, and the circumstances of his troubles being very uncommon, some that were his enemies triumphed in his calamities, *chap. xvi. 10*, *xix. 18*, *xxx. 1*, &c. Perhaps they made ballads of him; but his friends concerned themselves for him, and endeavoured to comfort him: *a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity*. Three of them are here named, *ver. 11*. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We shall meet with a fourth after, who, it should seem, was present at the whole conference, *viz. Elihu*; whether he came as a friend of Job, or only as an auditor, doth not appear: these three are said to be his friends, his intimate acquaintances, as David and Solomon had each of them one in their court that was called the king's friend. These three were eminently wise and good men, as appears by their discourses; they were old men, very old, and had a great reputation for knowledge, and a mighty reverence was paid to their judgment, *chap. xxxii. 6*. It is probable they were men of figure in their country, princes, or heads of houses. Now observe,

1. That Job, in his prosperity, had contracted friendship with them: if they were his equals, yet he had not that jealousy of them; if his inferiors, yet he had not that disdain of them which was an hindrance to an intimate converse and correspondence with them: and, to have such friends, adds more to his happiness, in the day of his prosperity, than all the head of cattle he was master of. Much of the comfort of this life lies in acquaintance and friendship with those that are prudent and victorious, and he that has few such friends ought to be choicer of them. Job's three friends are supposed to be all of them of the posterity of Abraham; which, for some descents, even in the families that were shut out from the covenant of peculiarity, retained some good fruits of that pious education which the father of the faithful gave to those under his charge. Eliphaz descended from Teman, the grandson of Esau, *Gen. xxxvi. 11*. Bildad (it is probable) from Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah, *Gen. xxv. 2*. Zophar is thought by some to be the same as Zopho, a descendant from Esau, *Gen. xxxvi. 14*. The preserving of so much wisdom and piety, among those that were strangers to the covenants of promise, was a happy preface of God's grace to the Gentiles, when the partition-wall should, in the latter days, be taken down. Esau was rejected, yet many that came from him inherited some of the best blessings.

2. That they continued their friendship with Job in his adversity, when most of his friends had forsaken him, *chap. xix. 14*. Two ways they shewed their friendship.

1. By the kind visit they made him in his affliction, to mourn with him, and to comfort him, *ver. 11*. Probably they had been wont to visit him in his prosperity, not to hunt or hawk with him, not to dance or play at cards with him, but to entertain and edify themselves with his learned and pious converse; and now he was in adversity they came to share with him in his griefs, as formerly they had come to share with him in his comforts. These were wise men, whose heart was in the house of mourning, *Ecc. vii. 4*. Visiting the afflicted, sick or sore, fatherless or childless in their sorrow, is made a branch of pure religion, and undefiled, *Jam. i. 27*, and, if done from a good principle, will be abundantly recompensed shortly, *Matth. xxv. 36*. By visiting the sons and daughters of affliction we may contribute to the improvement, (1.) Of our own grace; for many a good lesson is to be learned from the troubles of others; we may look upon them and receive instruction, and be made wise and serious. (2.) Of their comforts; by putting a respect upon them, we encourage them, and some good word may be spoken to them, which may help to make them easy. Job's friends came, not to satisfy their curiosity with an account of his troubles, and the strangeness of the circumstances of them; much less, as David's false friends, to make invidious remarks upon him, *Psal. xli. 6, 7, 8*, but to mourn with him, to mingle their tears with his, and so to comfort him. It is much more pleasant to visit those in affliction, to whom comfort belongs, than those to whom we must first speak conviction.

Concerning these visitants observe, (1.) That they were not sent for, but came of their own accord; (*chap. vi. 22*.) whence Mr. Caryl observes, that it is good manners to be an unbidden guest at the house of mourning, and in comforting our friends to prevent their invitations. (2.) That they made an appointment to come. Note, Good people should make appointments among themselves for doing good, to exciting and obliging one another to it, and assisting and encouraging one another in it. For the carrying on of any pious design, let hand join in hand. (3.) That they came with a design (and we have reason to think it was a sincere design) to comfort him, and proved miserable comforters through their unskillful management of his case. Many, that aim well, by mistake come short of their aim.

2. By their tender sympathy with him and concern for him in his affliction, when they saw him at some distance, he was so disfigured and disformed with his sores, that they knew him not, *ver. 12*. His face was foul with weeping, *chap. xvi. 10*, like Jerusalem's Nazarites that had been ruddy as the rubies, but were now blacker than a coal, *Lam. iv. 7, 8*. What a change will a sore disease, or, without that, an oppressing care and grief, make in the countenance in a little time? Is this Naomi? *Ruth i. 19*. So, Is this Job? How art thou fallen! How is thy glory stained and sullied, and all thine honour laid in the dust! God fit us for such changes!

Observing him thus miserably altered, they did not leave him in a fright or lothing, but expressed so much the more tenderness towards him.

1. Coming to mourn with him they vented their dissembled grief in all the then usual expressions of that passion; they wept aloud; the sight of them as is usual, revived Job's grief, and set him weeping afresh, which fetched floods of tears from their eyes. They rent their cloaths, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, as men that would strip themselves, and abase themselves, with their friend that was stripped and abased.

2. Coming to comfort him, they sat down with him on the ground, for so he received visits: and they, not in compliment to him, but in true compassion, put themselves into the same humble and uneasy place and posture. They had many a time, it is likely sitted with him on his couches, and



and at his table, in his prosperity, and were therefore willing to share with him in his grief and poverty, because they had shared with him in his joy and plenty. It was not a modish short visit that they made him, just to look upon him and be gone, but as those that could have no enjoyment of themselves, if they had returned to their place while their friend was in so much misery, they resolved to stay with him till they saw him mend or end, and therefore took lodgings near him, though he was not now able to entertain them as he had done, and they must therefore lie at their own charges. Every day, for seven days together, at the hours in which he admitted company, they came and sat with him, as his companions in tribulation, and exception from that rule, *Nullus ad amissas ibit amicus opes*: they that are poor have few friends.

They sat with him, but none spake a word to him, only they all attended to the particular narratives he gave of his troubles. They were silent, as men astonished and amazed: *Cuncti levis loquuntur, ingentes stupent*.

*So long a time they held their peace, to shew  
A reverence due to such prodigious woe.*

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

They spake not a word to him, whatever they said one to another, by way of instruction, for the improvement of the present providence. They said nothing to that purpose that afterwards they spoke a great deal to; nothing to grieve him, (*chap. iv. 2.*) because they saw his grief was very great already, and they were loathe at first to add affliction to the afflicted. There is a time to keep silence, when either the wicked is before us, and by speaking we may harden them, *Psal. xxxix. 1.* or when, by speaking, we may offend the generation of God's children, *Psal. lxxiii. 15.* Their not entering upon the following solemn discourses, till the seventh day, may perhaps intimate that it was the sabbath-day, which doubtless was observed in the patriarchal age, and to that day they adjourned the intended conference, because probably then company rested, as usual, to Job's house, to join with him in his devotions, who might be edified by the discourse. Or, rather, by their silence so long, they would intimate, that what they afterwards said was well considered and digested, and the result of many thoughts. *The heart of the wise studies to answer.* We should think twice before we speak once, especially in such a case as this, think long, and we shall be the better able to speak short and to the purpose.

### C H A P. III.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job, saith the apostle, *Jam. v. 11.* So we have, and of his impatience too: we admired that a man should be so patient as he was, *chap. i. and ii.* but we admire that a good man should be so impatient as he is here in this chapter, where we find him cursing his day; and, in passion, (1.) *Complaining that he was born*, ver. 1—10. (2.) *Complaining that he did not die as soon as he was born*, ver. 14—19. (3.) *Complaining that his life was now continued when he was in misery*, ver. 29—36. In this it may be owned that Job sinned with his lips; and it is written not for our imitation, but our admonition, that he who thinks he stands, may take heed lest he fall.

1. **A**FTER this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day. 2. And Job spake, and said, 3. Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a man-child conceived. 4. Let that day be darkness, let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. 5. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it, let a cloud dwell upon it, let the blackness of the day terrify it. 6. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it, let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. 7. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein. 8. Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning. 9. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light but have none, neither let it see the dawning of the day: 10. Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.

Long was Job's heart hot within him, and while he was musing the fire burned, and the more for being stifled and suppressed, and at length he spake with his tongue, but not such a good word as David spake after a long pause, *Lord make me to know my end*, *Psal. xxxix. 3, 4.* Seven days the prophet Ezekiel sat down astonished with the captives, and then (probably on the sabbath-day) the word of the Lord came to him, *Ezek. iii. 15.* So long Job and his friends sat thinking, but said nothing; they were afraid of speaking what they thought, lest they should grieve him; and he durst not give vent to his thoughts, lest he should offend them. They came to comfort him; but, finding his afflictions very extraordinary, they began to think comfort did not belong to him, suspecting him a hypocrite, and therefore said nothing; but losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore Job gives vent first to his thoughts; and, unless they had been better, it had been well if he had kept them to himself.

In short, he cursed his day, the day of his birth, wished he had never been born; could not think or speak of his own birth without regret and vexation. Whereas men usually observe the annual return of their birthday with rejoicing, he looked upon it as the unhappiest day of the year, because the unhappiest of his life, being the inlet to all this woe.

Now, 1. This was bad enough: the extremity of his trouble and the discomposure of his spirits may excuse it in part, but he can by no means be justified in it. Now he has forgotten the good he was born to, the lean kine have eaten up the fat ones, and he is filled with the thoughts of the evil only, and wishes he had never been born. The prophet Jeremiah himself expressed his resentment of his calamities, in language not much unlike this, not only, *Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me!* (*Jer. xv. 10.*) but cursed be the day wherein I was born, *Jer. xx. 14, &c.* We may suppose that Job, in his prosperity, many a time blessed God for the day of his birth, and reckoned it a happy day, yet now he brands it with all possible marks of infamy. When we consider the iniquity in which we were conceived and born, we have reason enough to reflect with sorrow and shame upon the day of our birth, and to say that the day of our death, by which we are freed from sin, (*Rom. vii. 7.*) is far better, *Ecc. vii. 1.* But to curse the day of our birth, because then we entered into the calamitous scene of life,

is to quarrel with the God of nature, to despise the dignity of our being, and to indulge a passion which our own calm and sober thoughts will make us ashamed of. Certainly there is no condition of life a man can be in, in this world, but he may in it (if it is not his own fault) to honour God, and work out his own salvation, and make sure a happiness for himself in a better world, that he will have no reason at all to wish he had never been born, but a great deal of reason to say, he had his being to good purpose: yet, it must be owned, if there were not another life after this, and divine consolations to support us in the prospects of it, so many are the sorrows and troubles of this that we might sometimes be tempted to say we were made in vain, *Psal. lxxxix. 47.* and to wish we had never been. There are those in hell that, with good reason, wish they had never been born, as Judas, *Matt. xxvi. 24.* But, on this side hell, there can be no reason for so vain and ungrateful a wish. It was Job's folly and weakness to curse his day; we must lay of it, this was his infirmity; but good men have sometimes failed in the exercises of those graces they have been most eminent for, that we may understand that, when they are said to be perfect, it is meant they were upright, not that they were sinless. Lastly, let us observe it, to the honour of the spiritual life above the natural, that, though many have cursed the day of their first birth, never any cursed the day of their new-birth, nor wished they never had had grace and the Spirit of grace given them: those are the most excellent gifts, above life and being itself, and which will never be a burden.

2. Yet it was not so bad as Satan promised himself: he cursed his day, but he did not curse his God: was weary of his life, and would gladly have parted with that, but not weary of his religion; he resolutely cleaves to that and will never let it go. The dispute between God and Satan, concerning Job, was not whether Job had his infirmities, and whether he was subject to like passions as we are; that was granted; but whether he was a hypocrite, and secretly hated God, and if he were provoked would shew it; and, upon trial, it proved he was no such man. Nay, all this may consist with his being a pattern of patience; for, though he did thus speak unadvisedly with his lips, yet, both before and after, he expressed great submission and resignation to the holy will of God, and repented of his impatience: he condemned himself for it, and therefore God did not condemn him, nor must we, but watch the more carefully over ourselves, lest we sin after the similitude of this transgression.

The particular expressions, which Job used in cursing his day, are full of poetical tawdry, shame, and rapture, and create as much difficulty to the critics as the thing itself doth to the divines: we need not be particular in our observations upon them.

When he would express his passionate wish that he had never been, he falls foul upon the day; and,

1. He wished that earth might forget it; *Let it perish*, ver. 3. *Let it not be joined to the days of the year*, ver. 6. Let it be not only not inserted in the calendar in red letters, as the day of the king's nativity useth to be, (and Job was a king, *chap. xxix. ult.*) but let it be rased, and blotted out, and buried in oblivion. Let not the world know that ever such a man as I was born into it, and lived in it, who am made such a spectacle of misery.

2. That Heaven might frown upon it. *Let not God regard it from above*, ver. 4. Every thing is indeed as it is with God; that day is honourable on which he puts honour, and which he distinguisheth and crowns with his favour and blessing, as he did the seventh day of the week; but let my birth-day never be so honoured, let it be *nigro carbone notandus*, marked for an evil day, by him that determines the times before appointed. The Father and fountain of light appointed the greater light to rule the day, and lesser lights to rule the night, but let that want the benefit of both. (1.) *Let that day be darkness*, ver. iv. and, if the light of the day be darkness, how great is that darkness! How terrible, because then we look for light, let the gloominess of the day represent Job's condition, whose sun went down at noon. (2.) As for that night too, let it want the benefit of moon and stars, and *let darkness seize upon it*, thick darkness that may be felt, which will not befriend the repose of the night by its silence, but rather disturb it with its terrors.

3. That all joy might forsake it. Let it be a melancholy night, solitary, and not a merry night of music or dancing, *let no joyful voice come therein*, ver. 7. Let it be a long night, and not see the eyelids of the morning, (ver. 9.) which bring joy with them.

4. That all curses might follow it, ver. 8. Let none ever desire to see it, or bid it welcome when it comes; but, on the contrary, *Let them curse it that curse the day*. Whatever day any are tempted to curse, let them at the same time bestow one curse upon my birth-day; particularly those that make it their trade to raise up mourning at funerals with their duties of lamentation. Let them, that curse the day of others' death, in the same breath curse the day of my birth. Of those, who are so fierce and daring as to be ready to raise up the Leviathan, for that is the word here; who being about to strike the whale or crocodile, curse it with the bitterest curse they can invent, hoping by those incantations to weaken it, and so to make themselves masters of it. Probably some such custom might there be used, to which our divine poet alludes. Let it be as odious as *the day wherein men bewail the greatest misfortune*, or the time wherein they see the most dreadful apparition: so bishop Patrick, I suppose, taking the Leviathan here to signify the devil, as others do, who understand it of the curses used by conjurers and magicians in raising the devil, or when they have raised a devil they cannot lay.

But what is the ground of Job's quarrel with the day and night of his birth: It is because it shut not up the doors of his mother's womb, ver. 10. See the folly and madness of a passionate discontent, and how absurdly and extravagantly it talks, when the reins are laid in the neck of it. Is this Job, who was so much admired for his wisdom, that unto him men gave ear, and kept silence at his counsel, and after his words they spake not again? *chap. xxix. 21, 22.* Sure his wisdom failed him, (1.) When he took so much pains to express his desire that he had never been born, which at the best was a vain wish, for it is impossible to make that which has been not to have been. (2.) When he was so liberal of his curses upon a day and a night, that could not be hurt, or made ever the worse for his curses. (3.) When he wished a thing so very barbarous to his own mother, that she might not have brought him forth, when her full time was come, which must inevitably have been her death, and a miserable death. (4.) When he despised the goodness of God to him, in giving him a being; such a being; so noble and excellent a life, such a life, so far above that of any other creature in this lower world, and undervalued the gift, as not worth the acceptance, only because (*transit cum onere*) it was clogged with a proviso of trouble, which now at length came upon him, after many years enjoyment of its pleasures. What a foolish thing it was to wish that his eyes had never seen the light, that so they might not have seen sorrow, which yet he might hope to see through, and beyond which he might see joy. Did Job believe and hope that he should, in his flesh, see God at the latter day, *chap. xix. 26.* and yet would he wish he never had had a being capable of such a bliss, only because for the present he had sorrow in the flesh? God, by his grace, arm us against the foolish and hurtful lust of impatience!



11. Why died I not from the womb? *why* did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? 12. Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts, that I should suck? 13. For now should I have lain still, and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest; 14. With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves: 15. Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: 16. Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants *which* never saw light. 17. There the wicked cease *from* troubling: and there the weary be at rest. 18. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. 19. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master:

Job, perhaps, reflecting upon himself for his folly, in wishing he had never been born, follows it, and thinks to mend it with another little better, that he had died as soon as he was born, which he enlargeth upon in these verses. When our Saviour would set forth a very calamitous state of things, he seems to allow such a saying as this, *Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck*, Luke xxiii. 29. but blessing the barren womb is one thing, and cursing the fruitful womb is another! It is good to make the best of afflictions, but it is not good to make the worst of mercies: Our rule is, *Bless, and curse not*.

Life is often put for all good, and death for all evil, yet Job here very absurdly complains of life and its supports as a curse and plague to him, and envies death and the grave as the greatest and most desirable bliss. Surely Satan was deceived in Job, when he applied that maxim to him, *All that a man hath will he give for his life*; for never any man valued life at a lower rate than he did.

1. He ungratefully quarrels with life, and is angry that it was not taken from him as soon as it was given him, *ver. 11, 12. Why died I not from the womb?* See here, (1.) What a weak and helpless creature man is, when he comes into the world, and how slender the thread of life is when it is first drawn. We are ready to die from the womb, and to breathe our last as soon as we begin to breathe at all: we can do nothing for ourselves, as other creatures can, but should drop into the grave, if the knees did not prevent us; and the lamp of life, when first lighted, would go out of itself, if the bread given us, that we should suck, did not supply it with fresh oil. (2.) What a merciful and tender care Divine Providence took of us at our entrance into the world! It was owing to this that we *died not from the womb*, and did not *give up the ghost* when he came out of the belly. Why were we not cut off as soon as we were born? Not because we did not deserve it; justly might such weeds have been plucked up as soon as they appeared, justly might such cockatrices have been crushed in the egg; not because we did, or could, take any care of ourselves and our own safety. No creature comes into the world so listless as man: it was not our might or the power of our hand that preserved us these beings, but God's power and providence upheld our frail lives, and his pity and patience spared our forfeited lives. It was owing to this that the knees prevented us. Natural affection is put into parents' hearts by the hand of the God of nature; and hence it was, that the blessings of the bread attended those of the womb. (3.) What a great deal of vanity and vexation of spirit attends human life? If we had not a God to serve in this world, and better things to hope for in another world, considering the faculties we are endued with, and the troubles we are surrounded with, we should be strongly tempted to wish that we had *died from the womb*, which had prevented a great deal both of sin and misery. *He that is born to-day, and dies to-morrow, loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow*. (4.) The evil of impatience, fretfulness, and discontent, when it thus prevails, is unreasonable and absurd, it is impious and ungrateful, it is slighting and undervaluing God's favour. How much sorer life is imbibbered, we must say it is of the Lord's mercies that we died not from the womb, that we were not consumed. It is contradicting the common-sense and sentiments of mankind, and our own at another time: let discontented people disclaim never so much against life, they will be loathe to part with it when it comes to the setting to. When the old man in the fable, being tired with the burden, threw it down with discontent, and called for death, and death came to him, and asked him what he would have with him, he then answered, Nothing; but help me up with my burden.

2. He passionately applauds death and the grave, and seems hugely in love with them. To desire to die that we may be with Christ, that we may be free from sin, and that we may be *cloathed upon with our house which is from heaven*, is the effect and evidence of grace; but to desire to die only that we may be quiet in the grave, and delivered from the troubles of this life, favours of corruption. Job's considerations here may be of good use to reconcile us to death when it comes, and to make us easy under the arrest of it, but they ought not to be made use of as a pretence to quarrel with life while it is continued, or to make us uneasy under the burdens of it. It is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, be it living or dying, and so *live to the Lord, and die to the Lord*, and to be his in both, *Rom. xiv. 8*.

Job here frets himself with thinking that if he had but died as soon as he was born, and been carried from the womb to the tomb.

1. His condition would have been as good as that of the best. I should have been (saith he, *ver. 14.*) *with kings and counsellors of the earth*, whose pomp, power, and policy, cannot set them out of the reach of death, nor secure them from the grave, nor distinguish theirs from common dust in the grave. Even princes that had gold in abundance could not with it bribe death to overlook them when he came with his commission, and, though they filled their houses with silver, yet they were forced to leave it all behind them, no more to return to it. Some, by the desolate places which the kings and counsellors are here said to build for themselves, understand the sepulchres or monuments they prepared for themselves in their life-time; as Shebna, *Isa. xxii. 16. hewed him out a sepulchre*; and, by the gold which the princes had, and the silver with which they filled their houses, they understand the treasures which, they say, it was usual to deposit in the graves of great men. Such arts have men used to preserve their dignity, if possible, on the other side death, and to keep themselves from lying even with those of inferior rank; but it will not do, death is and will be an irresistible leveller, *mors septrā ligonibus aequat*. Rich and poor meet together in the grave; and there, a *hidden untimely birth*, (*ver. 16.*) a child that never saw light, or but just opened its eyes and peeped into the world, and, not liking it, closed them again and hastened out of it, lies as soft and easy, lies as high and safe, as kings and counsellors, and princes that had gold; and therefore, saith Job, would I had lain there in the dust rather than live to lie here in the ashes.

VOL. II. No. LXXI.

2. His condition would have been much better than now it was, *ver. 13. Then should I have lain still, and been quiet*, which now I cannot do, I cannot be, but am still toiling and unquiet: then I should have slept, whereas now I am restless. Now life and immortality are brought to a much clearer light by the gospel than before they were placed in; good Christians can give a better account than this of the gain of death; then should I have been present with the Lord, then should I have seen his glory face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly: but all that poor Job dreamed of was rest and quietness in the grave, out of the fear of evil tidings and out of the feeling of fore biles. Then should I have been quiet; and, had he kept his temper, his even easy temper still, which he was in in the two foregoing chapters, entirely resigned to the holy will of God, and acquiescing in it, he might have been quiet now; his soul at least might have dwelt at ease, even when his body lay in pain, *Psal. xxi. 13*.

Observe how finely he describes the repose of the grave; which (provided the soul also be at rest in God) may much assist our triumphs over it.

1. Those that now are troubled will there be out of the reach of trouble, *ver. 17. There the wicked cease from troubling*: when persecutors die they can no longer persecute, their *hatred and enmity are now perished*. Herod had vexed the church; but, when he became a prey for worms, he ceased from troubling. When the persecuted die, they are out of the danger of being any further troubled. Had Job been at rest in his grave, he had had no disturbance from the Sabeans and Chaldeans, none of all his enemies had created him any trouble.

2. Those that are now toiled will there see the period of their toils; *there the weary are at rest*: heaven is more than a rest to the souls of the saints, but the grave is a rest to their bodies; their pilgrimage is a weary pilgrimage, sin and the world they are weary of. Their services, sufferings, and expectations, they are wearied with, but in the grave they *rest from all their labours*, *Rev. xiv. 13. Isa. lvii. 2*. They are easy there, and make no complaints: these believers sleep in Jesus.

3. Those that were here enslaved are there at liberty: death is the prisoner's discharge, the relief of the oppressed, and the servant's manumission, *ver. 18. There the prisoners, though they walk not at large, yet they rest together, and are not put to work, to grind in that prison house*. They are no more insulted and trampled upon, menaced and terrified, by their cruel task masters, *they hear not the voice of the oppressor*. They that were here doomed to perpetual servitude, that could call nothing their own, no not their own bodies, are there no longer under command or controul; there the servant is free from his master; which is a good reason why those that have power should use it moderately, and those that are in subjection should bear it patiently, yet a little while.

4. Those that were at a vast distance from all others, there are upon a level, *ver. 19. The small and great are there, there the same, there all one, all alike free among the dead*. The tedious pomp and state which attend the great are at an end there, all the inconveniences of a poor and low condition are likewise over, death and the grave know no difference.

*Learn'd by death, the conqueror and the slave,  
The wife and foolish, cowards and the brave,  
Lie mix'd and undistinguish'd in the grave.*

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

20. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? 21. Which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures? 22. Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave? 23. *Why* is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? 24. For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. 25. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that, which I was afraid of, is come unto me. 26. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet: yet trouble came.

Job, finding it to no purpose to wish either that he had not been born, or had died as soon as he was born, here complains that his life was now continued, and not cut off: when men are set on quarreling there is no end of it, the corrupt heart will carry on the humour: having cursed the day of his birth, here he courts the day of his death. The beginning of this strife and impatience is as the letting forth of water.

1. He thinks it hard in general that miserable lives should be prolonged, *ver. 20, 21, 22. Wherefore is light in life given to them that are bitter in soul? Why doth he give light?* So it is in the original: he means God, yet doth not name him, though the devil had said, he will curse thee to thy face, but he tacitly reflects on the Divine Providence as unjust and unkind, in continuing life when the comforts of life are removed. Life is called light because pleasant and serviceable for walking and working; it is candle-light, the longer it burns the shorter it grows, and the nearer the socket: this light is said to be given us; for, if it were not daily renewed to us by a fresh gift, it would be lost. But Job reckons, to those that are in misery, it is *danger* *ἀνταρῶν*, gift and no gift, a gift that they had better do without, while the light only serves them to see their own misery by. Such is the vanity of human life, that even it sometimes becomes a vexation of spirit: and so alterable is the property of death, that, though dreadful to nature, even it may become desirable to nature itself: he speaks of those here, (1.) Who long for death when they have out-lived their comforts and usefulness, are burdened with age and infirmities, with pain or sickness, poverty or disgrace, and yet it comes not, while at the same time it comes to many that dread it, and would put it far from them. The continuance and period of life must be according to God's will, not according to ours. It is not fit we should be consulted how long we would live, and when we would die; our times are in a better hand than our own. (2.) Who dig for it as for hid treasures, i. e. would give any thing for a fair dismissal out of this world, which supposeth that then the thought of men's being their own executioners was not so much as entertained or suggested, else those that longed for it needed not take much pains for it, they might soon come at it (as Seneca tells them) if they pleased. (3.) Who bid it welcome, and are glad when they can find the grave, and see themselves stepping into it. If the miseries of this life prevail, contrary to nature, to make death itself desirable; shall not much more the hopes and prospects of a better life, to which death is our passage, make it so; and set us quite above the fear of it? It may be a sin to long for death; but I am sure it is no sin to long for heaven. 2. He thinks himself in particular hardly dealt with, that he might not be eased of his pain and misery by death, when he could not get ease



ease any other way. To be thus impatient of life, for the sake of the troubles we meet with, is not only unnatural in itself, but ungrateful to the Giver of life, and argues a sinful indulgence of our own passion, and a sinful inconsideration of our future state. Let it be our great and constant care to get ready for another world, and then let us leave it to God to order the circumstances of our removal thither as he thinks fit; Lord, when and how thou pleaseth; and this with such an indifference, that, if he should refer it to us, we would refer it to him again. Grace teacheth us in the midst of life's greatest comforts to be willing to die, and in the midst of its greatest crosses to be willing to live.

Job, to excuse himself in this mighty desire he had to die, pleads the little comfort and satisfaction he had in life.

1. In this present afflicted state troubles were continually felt, and were likely to be so. He thought he had cause enough to be weary of living; for, (1.) He had no comfort of his life; *my sighing comes before I eat*, ver. 24. The sorrows of life prevented and anticipated the supports of life; nay, they took away his stomach, and spoiled his appetite to his necessary food. His griefs returned as duly as his meals, and affliction was his daily bread. Nay, so great was the extremity of his pain and anguish, that he did not only sigh but roar, and his roarings were poured out like the waters in a full and constant stream. Our Master was acquainted with grief, and we must expect to be so too. (2.) He had no prospect of bettering his condition, his way was hid, and God had edged him in, ver. 23. He saw no way open of deliverance, nor knew he what course to take, his way was hedged up with thorns, that he could not find his path. See chap. xxiii. 8. Lam. iii. 7.

2. Even in his former prosperous state, troubles were continually feared: so that then he was never easy, ver. 25, 26. He knew so much of the vanity of this world, and the troubles to which of course he was born, that he was not in safety, neither had he rest then. That which made his grief now the more grievous was, that he was not conscious to himself of any great degree either of negligence or security in the day of his prosperity, which might provoke God thus to chastise him. (1.) He had not been negligent and mindless of his affairs, but kept up such a fear of troubles as was necessary to the maintaining of his guard: he was afraid for his children when they were feasting, lest they should offend God, chap. i. 5. afraid for his servants lest they should offend his neighbours; he took all the care he could of his own health, and managed himself and his affairs with all possible precaution, yet all will not do. (2.) He had not been secure, nor indulged himself in ease and softness, had not trusted in his wealth, nor flattered himself with the hopes of the perpetuity of his mirth. yet trouble came, to convince and mind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgot when he lived at ease. Thus his way was hid, for he knew not wherefore God contended with him. Now this consideration, instead of aggravating his grief, might rather serve to alleviate it: nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences for us, that in some measure we did our duty in a day of prosperity: and an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprise, the less it is a terror.

#### C H A P. IV.

Job, having warmly given vent to his passion, and so broken the ice, his friends here come gravely to give vent to their judgment upon his case; which perhaps they had communicated to one another apart, compared notes upon it, and talked it over among themselves, and found they were all agreed in their verdict, that Job's afflictions certainly proved him to have been a hypocrite; but they did not attack Job with this high charge, till, by the expressions of his discontent and impatience, in which they thought he reflected on God himself, he had confirmed them in the ill opinion they had before conceived of him and his character. Now they set upon him with great fear. The dispute begins, and it begins to be hot presently: the opponents are Job's three friends; Job himself is respondent, Elihu appears first as a moderator, and at length God himself gives judgment upon the controversy and the management of it. The question in dispute is, whether Job was an honest man or not? The same question that was in dispute between God and Satan in the two first chapters. Satan had yielded it, and durst not pretend that his cursing of his day was a constructive cursing of his God; no, he cannot deny but that Job still holds fast his integrity: but Job's friends will need have it, that if Job were an honest man he would not have been thus sorely and thus tediously afflicted; and therefore urge him to confess himself a hypocrite in the profession he had made of religion: No, saith Job, that I will never do; I have offended God, but my heart, notwithstanding, has been upright with him; and still he holds fast the comfort of his integrity. Eliphaz, who it is likely was the senior, or of the best quality, begins with him in this chapter: in which (1.) He bespeaks a patient hearing, ver. 2. (2.) He compliments Job with an acknowledgement of the eminency and usefulness of the profession he had made of religion, ver. 3, 4. (3.) He charges him with hypocrisy in his profession, grounding his charge upon his present troubles and his carriage under them, ver. 5, 6. (4.) To make good the inference, he maintains, that man's wickedness is that which always brings God's judgments, ver. 7—11. (5.) He corroborates his assertion by a vision which he had; in which he was minded of the incontestible purity and justice of God, and the meanness, and weakness, and sinfulness of man, ver. 12—21. By all this he aims to bring down Job's spirit, and to make him both penitent and patient under his afflictions.

1. **THEN** Eliphaz, the Temanite, answered and said, 2. If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking? 3. Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. 4. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. 5. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest: it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. 6. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?

In these verses,

1. Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is now about to give to Job by his discourse, ver. 2. If we assay a word with thee, offer a word of reproof and counsel, wilt thou be grieved and take it ill? We have reason to fear thou wilt: but there is no remedy, *Who can refrain from words?* Observe, (1.) With what modesty he speaks of himself and his own attempt. He will not undertake the management of the cause alone, but very humbly joins his friends with him, we will commune with thee: they that plead God's cause must be glad of help, lest it suffer through their weakness. He will not promise much, but begs leave to assay or attempt, and try if he could propose any thing that might be pertinent, and suit Job's case. In difficult

matters it becomes us to pretend no further, but only to try what may be said or done. Many excellent discourses have gone under the modest title of Essays. (2.) With what tenderness he speaks of Job and his present afflicted condition: if we tell thee our mind, wilt thou be grieved? Wilt thou take it ill? Wilt thou lay it to thine own heart as thine affliction, or to our charge as our fault? Shall we be reckoned unkind and cruel, if we deal plainly and faithfully with thee? We desire we may not, we hope we shall not, and should be sorry if that should be ill resented which is well intended. Note, We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, *Psalm lxxix. 25*. We should shew ourselves backward to say that which we foresee will be grievous, though never so necessary: God himself, though he afflicts justly, yet he doth not afflict willingly, *Lam. iii. 33*. (3.) With what assurance he speaks of the truth and pertinency of what he was about to say, *Who can withhold himself from speaking?* Surely it was a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, that laid him under this necessity of speaking: who can forbear speaking in vindication of God's honour, which we here reprove, in love to thy soul which we see endangered? Note, It is foolish pity not to reprove our friends, even our friends in affliction, for what they say or do amiss, only for fear of offending them. Whether men take it well or ill, we must with wisdom and meekness, do our duty, and discharge a good conscience.

2. He exhibits a twofold charge against Job.

1. As to his particular carriage under this affliction, he chargeth him with weakness and faint-heartedness, and that article of his charge there was too much ground for, ver. 3, 4, 5. And here,

(1.) He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. He owns that Job had instructed many, not only his own children and servants, but many others, his neighbours and friends, as many as fell within the sphere of his activity. He did not only encourage those who were teachers by office, and countenance them, and pay for the teaching of those that were poor, but he did himself instruct many; though a great man, he did not think it below him. King Solomon was a preacher: though a man of business he found time to do it, went among his neighbours, talked to them about their souls, and gave them good counsel. O that this example of Job were imitated by our great men! If he met with those that were ready to fall into sin, or sink under their troubles, his words upheld them; a wonderful dexterity he had in offering that which was proper to fortify persons against temptations, to support them under their burdens, and to comfort afflicted consciences. He had and used the tongue of the learned, knew how to speak a word in season to them that were weary, and employed himself much in that good work. With suitable counsels and comforts he strengthened the weak hands for work and service, and the spiritual warfare; and the feeble knees for the bearing up the man in his journey and under his load. It is our duty not only to lift up our own hands that hang down, by quickening and encouraging ourselves in the way of duty, *Heb. xii. 12*. but we must also strengthen the weak hands of others, as there is occasion, and do what we can to confirm their feeble hands, by saying, *to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong*, *1st. xxv. 3, 4*. The expressions seem to be borrowed from thence. Note, They that have abundance of spiritual riches should abound in spiritual charity. A good word, well and wisely spoken, may do more good than perhaps we think of.

But why doth Eliphaz mention this here? (1.) Perhaps he praiseth him thus for the good he had done, that he might make the intended reproof the more passable with him. Just commendation is a good preface to a just reprehension, will help to remove prejudices, and will show that the reproof comes not from ill will. Paul praised the Corinthians before he chid them, *1 Cor. xi. 7*. (2.) He remembers how Job had comforted others, as a reason why he might justly expect to be himself comforted; and yet, if conviction was necessary, in order to comfort, they must be excused if they applied themselves to that first: the comforter shall reprove, *John xvi. 8*. (3.) He speaks this perhaps in a way of pity, lamenting it, that, through the extremity of his affliction, he could not apply those comforts to himself which he had formerly administered to others. It is easier to give good counsel than to take it; to preach meekness and patience than to practise them. *Facile omnes, cum valemus, rectum consilium aegrotis damus*. Terent. (4.) Most think he mentions it as an aggravation of his present discontent, upbraiding him with his knowledge and the good offices he had done for others, *q. d.* Thou, that hast taught others, why dost thou not teach thyself? Is not this an evidence of thine hypocrisy, that thou hast prescribed that medicine to others which thou wilt not now take thyself, and so contradictest thyself, and actest against thine own known principles! Thou that teachest another not to faint, dost thou faint? *Rom. ii. 19*. Physician heal thyself. They, who have rebuked others, must expect to hear of it if they themselves become obnoxious to rebuke.

(2.) He upbraids him with his present low-spiritedness, ver. 5. Now it is come upon thee, now it is thy turn to be afflicted, and the bitter cup that goes round is put into thy hand; now it toucheth thee, thou faintest, thou art troubled. Here, (1.) He makes too light of Job's afflictions; it toucheth thee. The very word that Satan himself had used, chap. i. 11. ii. 5. Had Eliphaz felt but the one half of Job's affliction he would have said, it smites me, it wounds me; but, speaking of Job's afflictions, he makes but a flea-bite of it, it toucheth thee, and thou canst not bear to be touched; *uoli me tangere*. (2.) He makes too much of Job's resentments and aggravates them; thou faintest, or thou art beside thyself, thou raveest, and knowest not what thou sayest. Men, in deep distress, must have grains of allowance, and a favourable construction put upon what they say; when we make the worst of every word, we do not as we would be done by.

2. As to his general character before this affliction, he chargeth him with wickedness and false-heartedness; and that article of his charge was utterly groundless and unjust. How unkindly doth he banter him, and upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if they were all now come to nothing, and proved a sham, ver. 6. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? Doth it not all appear now to be a mere pretence? For, hadst thou been sincere in it, God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldst thou have carried thyself thus under the affliction. This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job a hypocrite, and disprove the character God had given of him: when he could not himself do this to God, but he still saw and said, *Job is perfect and upright*, then he endeavoured, by his friends, to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself an hypocrite: could he have gained that point he would have triumphed, *habes contentem reum*: but, by the grace of God, Job was enabled to hold his own, and would not bear false witness against himself. Note, Those that pass rash and uncharitable censures upon their brethren, and condemn them for hypocrites, do Satan's work, and serve his interest more than they are aware of. I know not how it comes to pass that this verse is differently read in several editions of our common English Bibles; the original, and all the ancient versions, put *thy hope*, before the *uprightness of thy ways*. So doth the Geneva, and most of the editions of the last translation; but I find one of the first, in 1612, has it, *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways and thy hope?* Both the Assembly's Annotations and Mr. Pool's have that reading, and an edition, in 1660, reads it, *Is not thy fear thy confidence; and the uprightness*



*reps of thy ways thy hope?* Doth it not appear now that all the religion, both of thy devotion and of thy conversation, was only in hope and confidence that thou shouldest grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary? The very thing that Satan suggested. *Is not thy religion thy hope, and thy right ways thy confidence?* So Mr. Broughton. Or, was it not, Didst thou not think that would have been thy protection; but thou art deceived? Or, would it not have been so? If it had been sincere would it not have kept thee from this despair? It is true, *if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength, thy grace, is small*, Prov. xxiv. 10. but it doth not therefore follow, thou hast no grace, no strength, at all. A man's character is not to be taken from a single act.

7. Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? 8. Even as I have seen they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. 9. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. 10. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken. 11. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.

Eliphaz here advanceth another argument to prove Job a hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him, but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great and extraordinary, and there being no prospect at all of his deliverance out of them.

To strengthen this argument he here lays down these two principles, which seem plausible enough.

1. That good men were never thus ruined, and for the proof of this he appeals to Job's own observation, *ver. 7. Remember, I pray thee*; recollect all that thou hast seen, heard, or read; and give me an instance of any one that was innocent, and righteous, and yet perished as thou dost, and was cut off as thou art. If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true, none that are innocent and righteous perish for ever: it is only a man of sin that is a *son of perdition*, 2 Thess. ii. 3. But then it is ill applied to Job; he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off: a man is never undone till he is in hell. But, if we understand it of any temporal calamity, his principle is not true. *The righteous perish*, Isa. lvii. 1. *There is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked*, Eccl. ix. 2. both in life and death; the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time (as early as it was) there were instances sufficient to contradict this principle. Did not righteous Abel perish, being innocent, and was not he cut off in the beginning of his days? Was not righteous Lot burnt out of house and harbour, and forced to retire to a melancholy cave? Was not righteous Jacob, a Syrian, ready to perish, Deut. xxvii. 5. And other such instances no doubt there were which are not on record.

2. That wicked men were often thus ruined; and, for the proof of this, he toucheth his own observation, *ver. 8. Even as I have seen, many a time, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, by the blast of God they perish*, *ver. 9.* We have daily instances of that; and therefore, since thou dost thus perish and art consumed, we have reason to think, that whatever profession of religion thou hast made, thou hast but ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness. Even as I have seen in others, so do I see in thee.

1. He speaks of sinners in general, politic busy sinners, that take pains in sin, for they plough iniquity; and expect gain by sin, for they sow wickedness: they that plough, plough in hope, but what is the issue? *they reap the same*: they shall of the *flush* reap corruption and ruin, Gal. vi. 7, 8. The harvest will be a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow, Isa. xvii. 11. He shall reap the same, *i. e.* the proper product of that seed: that which the sinner sows, he sows not that body that shall be, but God will give it a body, a body of death, *the end of those things*, Rom. vi. 21. Some, by iniquity and wickedness, understand wrong and injury done to others; they, who plough and sow that, shall reap the same, *i. e.* they shall be paid in their own coin. They that are troublesome shall be troubled, 2 Thess. i. 6. *Josh. vii. 25. The spoilers spoiled*, Isa. xxxiii. 1. and, that led captive, shall go captive, Rev. xiii. 10.

He farther describes their destruction, *ver. 9. By the blast of God they perish*. The projects they take so much pains in are defeated, God cuts in sunder the cords of these ploughers, Ps. cxxix. 3, 4. They themselves are destroyed; which is the just punishment of their iniquity. They perish *i. e.* they are destroyed utterly, they are consumed, *i. e.* they are destroyed gradually; and this by the blast and breath of God, *i. e.* (1.) By his wrath; his anger is the ruin of sinners, who are therefore called vessels of wrath, and his breath is said to kindle Tophet, Isa. xxx. 33. *who knows the power of his anger?* Ps. xc. 8. (2.) By his word: he speaks and it is done, easily and effectually. The spirit of God in the word consumes sinners, with that he slays them, *Hos. vi. 5.* saying and doing are not two things with God. The man of sin is said to be consumed with the *breath of Christ's mouth*, 2 Thess. ii. 8. compare *Isa. xi. 4. Rev. xix. 21.* Some think, in attributing the destruction of sinners to the blast of God and the breath of his nostrils, he refers to the wind which blew the house down upon Job's children, as if they were therefore sinners above all men because they suffered such things, Luke xiii. 2.

2. He speaks particularly of tyrants and cruel oppressors under the similitude of lions, *ver. 10, 11.* Observe, 1. How he describes their cruelty and oppression: the Hebrew tongue has five several names for lions, and they are all here used to set forth the terrible tearing power, fierceness, and cruelty, of proud oppressors: they roar, and rend, and prey upon all about them, and bring up their young ones to do so too, *Ezek. xix. 3.* The devil is a roaring lion, and they partake of his nature, and do his lusts. They are strong as lions, and subtle, Ps. x. 9. xvii. 12. and, as far as they prevail, lay all desolate about them.

3. How he describes their destruction; the destruction both of their power and their persons; they shall be restrained from doing farther hurt, and reckoned with for the hurt they have done. An effectual course shall be taken, (1.) That they shall not terrify; the voice of their roaring shall be stopped. (2.) That they shall not tear; God will disarm them, will take away their power to do hurt, *the teeth of the young lions are broken*, Psal. iii. 7. Thus shall the remainder of wrath be restrained. (3.) That they shall not enrich themselves with the spoil of their neighbours. Even the old lion is humbled, and perisheth for lack of prey; they that have surfeited on spoil and rapine are perhaps reduced to such straits as to die for hunger at last. (4.) That they shall not, as they promise themselves, leave a succession; the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad, to seek for food themselves, which the old ones used to bring in for them, *Neh. ii. 12. The lion did tear in pieces for his whelps*, but now they must shift for themselves. Perhaps Eliphaz intended in this to reflect upon Job, as if he, being the

greatest of all men of the east, had got this estate by spoil, and used his power in oppressing his neighbours, but now his power and estate were gone, and his family scattered: if so, it was pity a man, whom God praised, should be thus abused.

12. Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. 13. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, 14. Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. 15. Then a spirit passed before my face, the hair of my flesh stood up. 16. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, 17. Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker? 18. Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: 19. How much less on them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? 20. They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it. 21. Doth not their excellency, which is in them, go away? they die, even without wisdom.

Eliphaz, having undertaken to convince Job of the sin and folly of his discontent and impatience, here vouches a vision he had been favoured with, which he relates to Job for his conviction. What comes immediately from God all men will pay a particular deference to, and Job no doubt as much as any. Some think Eliphaz had this vision now lately, since he came to Job, putting words into his mouth wherewith to reason with him; and it had been well if he had kept to the purport of this vision, which would serve for a ground on which to reprove Job for his murmuring, but not to condemn him for an hypocrite. Others think he had it formerly, for God did in this way often communicate himself to the children of men in those first ages of the world, Job xxxiii. 15. Probably, God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other, when he was himself in an unquiet discontented frame, to calm and pacify him. Note, As we should comfort others with that wherewith we have been comforted, (2 Cor. i. 4.) so we should endeavour to convince others with that which has been powerful to convince us.

The people of God had not then any written word to quote, and therefore God sometimes notified to them even common truths, by the extraordinary ways of revelation. We that have Bibles have there (thanks be to God) a more sure word to depend upon than even visions and voices, 2 Pet. i. 9. Observe,

1. The manner how this message was sent to Eliphaz, and the circumstances of the conveyance of it to him. (1.) It was brought him secretly, or by stealth: some of the sweetest communion gracious souls have with God is in secret, where no eye sees but he that is all eye. God has ways of bringing conviction, counsel, and comfort, to his people, unobserved by the world, by private whispers, as powerfully and effectually as by the public ministry. *His secret is with them*, Psal. xxv. 14. As the evil spirit often steals good words out of the heart, Matt. xiii. 19. so the good spirit sometimes steals good words into the heart, or ever we are aware. (2.) He received a little thereof, *ver. 12.* And it is but little of divine knowledge that the best receive in this world: we know little in comparison with what is to be known, and with what we shall know when we come to heaven. *How little a portion is heard of God!* Job. xxvi. 14. *We know but in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. See his humility and modesty. He pretends not to have understood it fully, but something of it he perceived. (3.) It was brought him in the visions of the night, *ver. 13.* When he was retired from the world and the hurry of it, and all about him was composed and quiet. Note, The more we are withdrawn from the world, and the things of it, the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are communing with our own hearts, and are still, (Psal. iv. 4.) then is a proper time for the Holy Spirit to commune with us. When others were asleep, Eliphaz was ready to receive this visit from heaven; and, probably, like David, was meditating upon God in the night watches; in the midst of good thoughts this thing was brought to him. We should hear more from God if we thought more of him; yet some are surprised with convictions in the night, Job xxxiii. 14, 15. (4.) It was prefaced with terrors; fear came upon him, and trembling, *ver. 14.* It should seem, before he either heard or saw any thing, he was seized with this trembling, which shook his bones, and perhaps the bed under him. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty being struck upon his spirit, he was thereby prepared for a divine visit. Whom God intends to honour, he first humbles and lays low, and will have us all to serve him with holy fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

2. The messenger by whom it was sent, a spirit, one of the good angels, who are employed not only as the ministers of God's providence, but sometimes as the ministers of his word. Concerning this apparition, which Eliphaz saw, we are here told, *ver. 15, 16.* (1.) That it was real, and not a dream; not a fancy: an image was before his eyes, he plainly saw it; at first it passed and repassed before his face, moved up and down, but at length it stood still to speak to him. If some have been so knavish as to impose false visions on others, and some so foolish as to be themselves imposed upon, it doth not therefore follow but that there have been apparitions of spirits, both good and bad. (2.) That it was indistinct, and somewhat confused. He could not discern the form thereof, so as to frame any exact idea of it in his own mind, much less to give a description of it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, not his curiosity gratified. We know little of spirits, we are not capable of knowing much of them, nor is it fit we should; all in good time, we must shortly remove to the world of spirits, and shall then be better acquainted with them. (3.) That it put him into a mighty consternation, so that his hair stood on end. Ever since man sinned, it has been terrible to him to receive an express from heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence; apparitions therefore, even of good spirits, have always made deep impressions of fear, even upon good men. How well is it for us that God sends us his messages not by spirits! but by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid? See *Dan. vii. 28. x. 8, 9.*

3. The message itself: before it was delivered there was silence; profound silence, *ver. 16.* When we are to speak either from God, or to him, it becomes us to address ourselves to it with a solemn pause, and so to set bounds about the mount on which God is to come down, and not be hasty to utter any thing. It was in a still small voice that the message was delivered, and this was it, *ver. 17. Shall mortal man be more just than God, the immortal God? Shall a man be thought to be, or pretend to be more pure than his Maker?* Away with such a thought! (1.) Some think Eliphaz aims hereby



hereby to prove that Job's great afflictions were a certain evidence of his being a wicked man: a mortal man would be though unjust, and very impure, if he should thus correct and punish a servant or subject, unless he had been guilty of some very great crime; if, therefore, these were not some great crimes for which God thus punisheth thee, man would be more just than God, which is not to be imagined. (2.) I rather think it is only a reproof of Job's murmuring and discontent; shall a man pretend to be more just and pure than God? more truly to understand and more strictly to observe the rules and laws of equity than God? Shall Enosh, mortal, miserable man, be so insolent; nay, shall Geber, the strongest and most eminent man; man, at his best estate, pretend to compare with God, or stand in competition with him! Note, It is most impious and absurd to think either others or ourselves more just and pure than God. Those that quarrel and find fault with the directions of the divine law, the dispensations of the divine grace, or the dispossals of the divine Providence, make themselves more just and pure than God; and they, who thus reprove God, let them answer it. What! sinful man, (for he had not been mortal if he had not been sinful,) short-sighted man, shall he pretend to be more just more pure than God; who, being his Maker, is his lord and owner! Shall the clay contend with the potter? What justice and purity there is in man, God is the author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure. See *Psal.* xciv. 9, 10.

4. The comment which Eliphaz makes upon this, for so it seems to be; yet some take all the following verses to be spoken in vision. It comes all to one.

1. He shews how little the angels themselves are in comparison with God, *ver.* 18. Angels are God's servants, waiting servants, working servants, they are his ministers, *Psal.* civ. 4. bright and blessed beings they are, but God neither needs them, nor is benefited by them, and is himself infinitely above them; and therefore, (1.) He puts no trust in them, did not repose a confidence in them, as we do in those we cannot live without; there is no service in which he employs them, but, if he pleased, he could have it done as well without them. He never made them his confidants, or of his cabinet-council. *Mat.* xxiv. 36. He doth not leave his business wholly to them, but *his own eyes run to and fro through the earth*, 2 *Chron.* xvi. 9. See this phrase, *Job* xxxix. 11. Some give this sense of it, so mutable is even the angelical nature, that God would not trust them with their own integrity; if he had, they would all have done, as some did, left their first estate, but he saw it necessary to give them a supernatural grace to confirm them. (2.) He chargeth them with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with God. If the world were left to the government of the angels, and they were trusted with the sole management of affairs, they would take false steps, and every thing would not be done for the best, as now it is. Angels are intelligences; but finite ones. Though not chargeable with iniquity, yet with imprudence. This last clause is variously rendered by the critics. I think it would bear this reading, repeating the negation, which is very common. He will put no trust in his saints, *nor will he glory in his angels, or make his boast of them*, as if their praises or services added any thing to him: it is his glory that he is infinitely happy without them. *In angelis suis non ponet gloriationem*.

2. Thence he infers how much less man is, how much less to be trusted in or gloried in: if there be such a distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is represented here in his meanness.

1. Look upon man in his life, and he is *very mean*, *ver.* 19. Take man in his best estate, and he is a very despicable creature in comparison with the holy angels, though honourable if compared with the brutes. It is true, angels are spirits, and the souls of men are spirits; but (1.) Angels are pure spirits, the souls of men dwell in houses of clay; such the bodies of men are. Angels are free, human souls are caged, and the body is a cloud, a clog to it, it is its cage, it is its prison. It is a house of clay, mean and mouldering; an earthen vessel, soon broken, as it was first formed according to the good pleasure of the potter. It is a cottage, not a house of cedar, or a house of ivory, but of clay, which would soon be in ruins if not kept in constant repair. (2.) Angels are fixed, but the very foundation of that house of clay in which man dwells, is in the dust. A house of clay, if built upon a rock, might stand long; but, if founded in the dust, the uncertainty of the foundation will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. As man was made out of the earth, so he is maintained and supported by that which comes out of the earth. Take away that, and his body returns to its earth. We stand but upon the dust; some have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others; but still it is the earth that stays us up, and will shortly swallow us up. (3.) Angels are immortal, but man is soon crushed; the earthly house of his tabernacle dissolved, he dies and wastes away; is crushed like a moth between one's fingers, as easily, as quickly: one may almost as soon kill a man as kill a moth. A little thing will do it, he is *crushed before the face of the moth*; so the word is. If some lingering distemper, which consumes like a moth, be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than he can resist an acute distemper that comes roaring upon him like a lion. See *Ios.* v. 12—14. Is such a creature as this to be trusted in, or can any service be expected from him, by that God who puts no trust in angels themselves?

2. Look upon him in his death and he appears yet more despicable and unfit to be trusted. Men are mortal, and dying, *ver.* 20, 21. (1.) In death they are destroyed, and perish for ever, as to this world; it is the final period of their lives, and all their employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more. (2.) They are dying daily, and continually waiting; *destroyed from morning to evening*; death is still working in us, *like a mole digging our grave at each remove*, and, we so continually lie exposed, that we are killed all the day long. (3.) Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off; it last perhaps but from morning to evening. It is but a day, (so some understand it): their birth and death are but the sun-rise and sun-set of the same day. (4.) In death all their excellency passeth away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death, but dies with them; nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power, descend after them. (5.) Their wisdom cannot save them from death, they die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth. (6.) It is so common a thing, that no body heeds it, or takes any notice of it; they perish *without any regarding it*, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought.

Some think the eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of as well as their temporal death. *They are destroyed, or broken to pieces by death, from morning to evening; and, if they repent not, they perish for ever*; so some read it, *ver.* 20. they perish for ever, because they regard not God and their duty, they consider not their latter end, *Lam.* i. 9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away, and they die, they die the second death, for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying creature as this pretend to be *more just than God, and more pure than his Maker*? No, instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him admire he is out of hell.

Eliphaz, in the foregoing chapter, for the making good of his charge against Job, had couched a word from heaven, sent him in a vision. In this chapter he appeals to those that bear record on earth, to the saints, the faithful witnesses of God's truths, in all ages, *ver.* 1. *they will testify*, (1.) That the sin of sinners is their ruin, *ver.* 2—5. (2.) That yet affliction is the common lot of mankind, *ver.* 6, 7. (3.) That, when we are in affliction, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God, for he is able and ready to help us, *ver.* 8—16. (4.) That the afflictions which are borne well will end well; and Job particularly, if he would come to a better temper, might assure himself that God had great mercy in store for him, *ver.* 17—27. So that he concludes his discourse in somewhat a better humour than he began it.

1. **C**ALL now, if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn? 2. For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one. 3. I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation. 4. His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them. 5. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.

A very warm dispute being begun between Job and his friends, Eliphaz here makes a fair motion to put the matter to a reference; and in all debates perhaps the sooner that is done the better, if the contenders cannot end it between themselves; and so well assured is Eliphaz of the goodness of his own cause, that he moves Job himself to choose the arbitrators, *ver.* 1. *Call now, if there be any that will answer thee, i. e.* (1.) If there be any that suffer as thou sufferest; canst thou produce an instance of any one that was really a saint, that was reduced to such extremity as thou art now reduced to? God never dealt with any that love his name so as he deals with thee, and therefore sure thou art none of them. (2.) If there be any that say as thou sayest: did ever any good man curse his day as thou dost? Or, will any of the saints justify thee in these heats or passions, or say, that these are the spots of God's children? thou wilt find none of the saints that will be either thine advocates or mine antagonists. To which of the saints wilt thou turn? Turn to which thou wilt, and thou wilt find they are all of my mind; I have the *communis sensus fidelium*, the unanimous vote of all the saints on my side, they will all subscribe to what I am going to say. See *Job* xxxiv. 8.

Observe, (1.) Good people are called saints, even in the Old Testament; and therefore I know not why we should in common speaking (unless because we must *loqui cum vulgo*) appropriate the title to those of the New Testament, and not say St. Abraham, and St. Moses, and St. Isaiah, as well as St. Matthew and St. Mark; and St. David the psalmist as well as St. David the British bishop. Aaron is expressly called the *saint of the Lord*. (2.) All that are themselves saints will turn to those that are so, will choose them for their friends and converse with them; will choose them for their judges and consult with them. See *Psal.* cxix. 79. The saints shall *judge the world*, 1 *Cor.* vi. 1, 2. *Walk in the way of good men*, *Prov.* ii. 20. *the old way, the footsteps of the flock*. Every one chooseth some sort of people or other to whom he studies to recommend himself, and by whose sentiments he reckons honour and dishonour: now all true saints endeavour to recommend themselves to those that are so, and to stand right in their opinion. (3.) There are some truths so plain and so universally known and believed, that one may venture to appeal to any of the saints concerning them. However there are some things about which they unhappily differ, there are many more, and more considerable, in which they are agreed; as the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the worth of the soul, the necessity of a holy life, and the like. Though they do not all live up as they should to their belief of these truths, yet they are all ready to bear their testimony to them.

Now there are two things which Eliphaz here maintains, and doubts not but all the saints concur with him.

1. That the sin of sinners directly tends to their own ruin, *ver.* 2. *Wrath kills the foolish man*, his own wrath doth it, and therefore he is foolish for indulging it; it is a fire in his bones, in his blood, enough to have put him into a fever; and envy is the rottenness of the bones, and so slays the silly one that frets himself with it. So it is with thee, saith Eliphaz, while thou quarrest with God, thou dost thyself the greatest mischief; thine anger at thine own troubles, and thine envy at our prosperity, doth but add to thy pain and misery: turn to the saints, and thou wilt find they understand themselves better. Job had told his wife she spake as the foolish women; now Eliphaz tells him he acted as the foolish men, the silly ones. Or it may be meant thus: If men are ruined and undone, it is always their own folly that ruins and undoes them. They kill themselves by some lust or other; therefore, no doubt, Job, thou hast done some foolish thing, by which thou hast brought thyself into this calamitous condition. Many understand it of God's wrath and jealousy. Job needed not be uneasy at the prosperity of the wicked, for the world's smiles can never shelter them from God's frowns; they are foolish and silly if they think they will. God's anger and indignation will be the death, the eternal death, of those on whom it fastens: What is hell, but that without mixture or period?

2. That their prosperity is short and their destruction certain, *ver.* 3, 4, 5. He seems here to parallel Job's case with that which is commonly the case of wicked people.

1. Job had prospered for a time, seemed confirmed, and was secure in his prosperity, and it is common for foolish wicked men to do so. *I have seen them taking root*, planted, and in their own and others apprehensions fixed and likely to continue. See *Jer.* xii. 2 *Psal.* xxxvii. 35, 36. We see worldly men taking root in the earth, on earthly things they fix the standing of their hopes, and from them they draw the sup of their comforts: the outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth.

2. Job's prosperity was now at an end, and so has the prosperity of other wicked people quickly been.

1. Eliphaz foresaw the ruin with an eye of faith. They, who looked only at present things blessed their habitation, and thought them happy, blessed it long, and wished themselves in their condition: but Eliphaz cursed it, suddenly cursed it, as soon as he saw them begin to take root, *i. e.* he plainly foresaw and foretold their ruin; not that he prayed for it, *I have not desired the woe of the day*, but he prognosticated it: *He went into the sanctuary, and there under stood their end*, and heard their doom read, *Psal.* lxxiii. 17, 18. That the *prosperity of fools will destroy them*, *Prov.* i. 32. They, who believe the word of God can see a *curse in the house of the wicked*,



wicked, Prov. iii. 33. though it be never so finely and firmly built, and never so full of all good things, and can foresee that it will in time infallibly consume it, with the timber thereof and the stones thereof, *Zech. v. 4.*

2. He saw at length what he had foreseen; he was not disappointed in his expectation concerning him, the event answered it; his family was undone, and his estate ruined. In which particulars he plainly and very indignantly reflects on Job's calamities. (1.) His children were crushed, *ver. 4.* They thought themselves safe in their eldest brother's house, but were far from safety, for they were crushed in the gate; perhaps the door or gate of the house was highest built, and fell heaviest upon them, and there was none to deliver them from perishing in the ruins. This is commonly understood of the destruction of the families of wicked men, by the execution of justice upon them, to oblige them to restore what they have ill got. They leave it to their children, but the descent shall not bar the entry of the rightful owners, who will crush their children, and cast them by due course of law, and there shall be none to help them: or perhaps by oppression, *Psal. cix. 9, &c.* (2.) His estate was plundered, *ver. 5.* Job's was so; the hungry robbers, the Sabaeans and Chaldeans, ran away with it, and swallowed it, and this, saith he, I have often observed in others. What has been got by spoil and rapine has been lost the same way. The careful owner hedged it about with thorns, and then thought it safe, but the fence proved insignificant against the greediness of the spoilers; if hunger will break through stone walls, much more through thorn hedges; and against the divine curse, which will go through the thorns and briers, and burn them together, *Ila. xxvii. 4.*

6. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground: 7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. 8 I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: 9. Which doth great things, and unsearchable: marvellous things without number. 10. Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: 11. To set on high those that be low; that those, which mourn, may be exalted to safety. 12. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. 13. He taketh the wife in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. 14. They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon day as in the night. 15. But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. 16. So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

Eliphaz, having touched Job in a very tender part, in mentioning both the loss of his estate and the death of his children as the just punishment of his sin, that he might not drive him to despair here begins to encourage him, and puts him in a way to make himself easy. Now he doth very much change his voice, (allude to *Gak. iv. 20.*) and speaks Job fair, as if he would atone for the hard words he had given him.

1. He minds him, that no affliction comes by chance, nor is to be attributed to second causes. It doth not come forth of the dust, nor spring out of the ground, as the grass doth, *ver. 6.* It doth not come of course at certain seasons of the year, as natural productions do, by a chain of second causes. The proportion between prosperity and adversity is not so exactly observed by Providence as that between day and night, summer and winter, but according to the will and counsel of God, when and as he thinks fit. Some read it, *Sin comes not forth of the dust, nor iniquity out of the ground.* If men be bad, they must not lay blame upon the soil, the climate, or the stars, but on themselves. *If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* We must not attribute our afflictions to fortune, for they are from God; nor our sins to fate, for they are from ourselves; so that, whatever trouble we are in, we must own that God sends it upon us; and we prove it to ourselves: the former is a reason why we should be very patient, the latter why we should be very penitent, when we are afflicted.

2. He minds him, that trouble and affliction is what we have all reason to expect in this world. *Man is born to trouble,* *ver. 7.* Not as a man; had he kept his innocency he had been born to pleasure; but as sinful man, as *born of a woman,* *Job xiv. 1.* who was in the transgression: man is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. Even those that are born to honour and estate yet are born to trouble in the flesh. In our fallen state, it is become natural to us to sin, and the natural consequence of that is affliction, *Rom. v. 12.* There is nothing in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upward. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption; and, being called *transgressors from the womb,* no wonder that we deal very treacherously, *Ila. xlviii. 8.* And such is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles also thence arise as naturally as the sparks fly upward! so many are they, so thick and so fast doth one follow another: why then should we be surprised at our afflictions as strange, or quarrel with them as hard, when they are but what we are born to? Man is born to labour, so it is in the margin; is sentenced to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, which should inure him to hardness, and make him bear his afflictions the better.

3. He directs him how to behave himself under his affliction, *ver. 8.* *I would seek unto God;* surely I would: so it is in the original. Here is, (1.) A tacit reproof to Job for not seeking to God, but quarrelling with him: Job, if I had been in thy case, I would not have been so peevish and passionate as thou art, I would have acquiesced in the will of God. It is easy to say what we would do if we were in such a one's case; but, when it comes to the trial, perhaps it will be found not so easy to do as we say. (2.) Very good and seasonable advice to him, which Eliphaz transfers to himself in a figure: for my part, the best way I should think I could take, if I were in thy condition, would be to apply myself to God. Note, We should give our friends no other counsel but what we would take ourselves if we were in their case; that we may be easy under our afflictions, may get good by them, and may see a good issue of them. (1.) We must, by prayer, fetch in mercy and grace from God: seek to him as a father and friend, though he contend with us, as one who is alone able to support and succour us: his favour we must seek when we have lost all we have in the world; to him we must address ourselves, as the fountain and father of all good, all consolation. *Is any afflicted, let him pray.* It is heart's ease, a salve for every sore. (2.) We must, by patience, refer ourselves and our cause to him. *To God would I commit my cause:* having spread it before him, I would leave it with him; having laid it at his feet, I would lodge

it in his hand; *Here am I, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good.* If our cause be indeed a good cause, we need not fear committing it to God, for he is both just and kind. They that would seek, so as to speed, must refer themselves to God.

4. He encourageth him thus to seek God and commit his cause to him: it will not be in vain to do so, for he is one in whom we shall find effectual help. Two things in God he recommends to his consideration:

1. God's almighty power and sovereign dominion. In general, he doth great things, *ver. 9.* great indeed; for he can do any thing, he doth do every thing; and all according to the counsel of his own will. Great indeed; for the operations of his power are, (1.) Unsearchable, and such as can never be fathomed, can never be found out, *from the beginning to the end,* *Ecc. iii. 11.* The works of nature are mysteries, the most curious searches come far short of full discoveries, and the wisest philosophers have owned themselves at a loss: the designs of Providence are much more deep and unaccountable, *Rom. xi. 33.* (2.) Numerous, and such as can never be reckoned up: he doth great things without number; his power is never exhausted, nor will all his purposes ever be fulfilled till the end of time. (3.) They are marvellous, and such as can never be sufficiently admired, eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. Now, by the consideration of this, Eliphaz intends, (1.) To convince Job of his fault and folly in quarrelling with God: we must not pretend to pass a judgment upon his work, for they are unsearchable and above our inquiries; nor must we strive with our Maker, for he will certainly be too hard for us, and is able to crush us in a moment. (2.) To encourage Job to seek unto God, and to refer himself to him: what more encouraging than to see that he is one to whom power belongs? He can do great things and marvellous for our relief, when we are brought never to low.

He gives some instances of God's dominion and power.

1. God doth great things in the kingdom of nature; he gives rain upon the earth, *ver. 10.* put here for all the gifts of common providence, all the fruitful seasons by which he filleth our hearts with food and gladness, *Acts xiv. 17.* Observe, when he would shew what great things God doth, he speaks of his giving rain, which, because it is a common thing we are apt to look upon as a little thing; but, if we duly consider how it is produced, and what is produced by it, we shall see it to be a great work, both of power and goodness.

2. He doth great things in the affairs of the children of men. Not only enricheth the poor and comforts the needy by the rain he sends, *ver. 10.* but, in order to the advancing of those that be low, he disappoints the devices of the crafty; for *ver. 11.* is to be joined to *ver. 12.* and compared with *Luke i. 51, 52, 53.* He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and hath exalted them of low degree, and filled the hungry with good things.

See 1. How he frustrates the counsels of the proud and politic, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* There is a supreme power that manageth and over-ruleth men that think themselves free and absolute, and fulfils its own purposes in despite of their projects. Observe, (1.) The froward that walk contrary to God and the interests of his kingdom, are often very crafty, for they are the seed of the old serpent, that was noted for his subtilty: they think themselves wise, but at their end will be fools. (2.) The froward enemies of God's kingdom have their devices, their enterprises, and their counsels, against it, and against the loyal faithful subjects of it. They are restless and unwearied in their designs, close in their consultations, high in their hopes, deep in their politics, and fast linked in their confederacies, *Psal. ii. 1, 2.* (3.) God easily can and (as far as is for his glory) certainly will blast and defeat all the designs of his and his peoples enemies. How were the plots of Ahithophel, Sanballat, and Haman, baffled! The confederacies of Syria and Ephraim against Judah, of Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, against God's Israel, the kings of the earth, and the princes, against the Lord and against his anointed, broken! The hands that have been stretched out against God and his church have not performed their enterprise, nor have the weapons formed against Sion profited. (4.) That which enemies have designed for the ruin of the church has often turned to their own ruin, *ver. 13.* He taketh the wife in their own craftiness, and suares them in the work of their own hands, *Psal. vii. 15, 16.* This is quoted by the apostle, *1 Cor. iii. 19,* to show how the learned men of the heathen were befooled by their own vain philosophy. (5.) When God intimates men they are perplexed and at a loss, even in those things that seem most plain and easy, *ver. 14.* They meet with darkness, even in the day time: nay, as it is in the margin, they run themselves into darkness by the violence and precipitation of their own counsels. See *chap. xii. 20, 24, 25.*

2. How he favours the cause of the poor and humble, and espouseth that.

1. He exalteth the humble, *ver. 11.* Those, whom proud men contrive to crush, he raiseth from under their feet, and sets them in safety, *Psal. xii. 5.* The lowly in heart, and those that mourn, he advanceth, he comforteth, and makes them to dwell on high, in the munitions of rocks, *Ila. xxxiii. 16.* Sion's mourners are the sealed ones, marked for safety, *Ezek. ix. 4.*

2. He delivereth the oppressed, *ver. 15.* The designs of the crafty were to ruin the poor: tongue, and hand, and sword, and all, are at work in order to this; but God takes them under his special protection; who, being poor and unable to help themselves, being his poor, and devoted to his praise, have committed themselves to him. He saves them from the mouth that speaks hard things against them, and the hand that doth hard things against them; for he can, when he pleases, tie the tongue and wither the hand.

And the effect of this is, *ver. 16.* (1.) That weak and timorous saints are comforted: *so the poor has hope,* that began to despair: the experiences of some are encouragements to others to hope the best in the worst of times, for it is the glory of God to send help to the helpless and hope to the hopeless. (2.) That daring threatening sinners are confounded; iniquity stops her mouth, being surprised at the strangeness of the deliverance, ashamed of its enmity against those who appear to be the favourites of heaven, mortified at the disappointment, and compelled to acknowledge the justice of God's proceedings, having nothing to object against them. Those that hector God's poor, that frightened them, menaced them, and falsely accused them, will not have a word to say against them when God appears for them. See *Psal. lxxvi. 8, 9.* *Ila. xxvi. 11.* *Mic. vii. 16.*

17. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: 18. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole, 19. He shall deliver thee in fix troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. 20. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and, in war, from the power of the sword. 21. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue:

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case any other way. To be thus impatient of life, for the sake of the troubles we meet with, is not only unnatural in itself, but ungrateful to the Giver of life, and argues a sinful indulgence of our own passion, and a sinful inconsideration of our future state. Let it be our great and constant care to get ready for another world, and then let us leave it to God to order the circumstances of our removal thither as he thinks fit; Lord, when and how thou pleaseth; and this with such an indifference, that, if he should refer it to us, we would refer it to him again. Grace teacheth us in the midst of life's greatest comforts to be willing to die, and in the midst of its greatest crosses to be willing to live.

Job, to excuse himself in this mighty desire he had to die, pleads the little comfort and satisfaction he had in life.

1. In this present afflicted state troubles were continually felt, and were likely to be so. He thought he had cause enough to be weary of living; for, (1.) He had no comfort of his life; *my sighing comes before I eat*, ver. 24. The sorrows of life prevented and anticipated the supports of life; nay, they took away his stomach, and spoiled his appetite to his necessary food. His griefs returned as duly as his meals, and affliction was his daily bread. Nay, so great was the extremity of his pain and anguish, that he did not only sigh but roar, and his roarings were poured out like the waters in a full and constant stream. Our Master was acquainted with grief, and we must expect to be so too. (2.) He had no prospect of bettering his condition, his way was hid, and God had edged him in, ver. 23. He saw no way open of deliverance, nor knew he what course to take, his way was *hedged up with thorns*, that he could not find his path. See *chap. xxiii. 8. Lam. iii. 7.*

2. Even in his former prosperous state, troubles were continually feared: so that then he was never easy, ver. 25, 26. He knew so much of the vanity of this world, and the troubles to which of course he was born, that he was not in safety, neither had he rest then. That which made his grief now the more grievous was, that he was not conscious to himself of any great degree either of negligence or security in the day of his prosperity, which might provoke God thus to chastise him. (1.) He had not been negligent and mindless of his affairs, but kept up such a fear of troubles as was necessary to the maintaining of his guard: he was afraid for his children when they were feasting, lest they should offend God, *chap. i. 5.* afraid for his servants lest they should offend his neighbours; he took all the care he could of his own health, and managed himself and his affairs with all possible precaution, yet all will not do. (2.) He had not been secure, nor indulged himself in ease and softness, had not trusted in his wealth, nor flattered himself with the hopes of the perpetuity of his mirth, yet trouble came, to convince and mind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgot when he lived at ease. Thus his way was hid, for he knew not wherefore God contended with him. Now this consideration, instead of aggravating his grief, might rather serve to alleviate it: nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences for us, that in some measure we did our duty in a day of prosperity: and an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprise, the less it is a terror.

#### C H A P. IV.

*Job, having warmly given vent to his passion, and so broken the ice, his friends here come gravely to give vent to their judgment upon his case; which perhaps they had communicated to one another apart, compared notes upon it, and talked it over among themselves, and found they were all agreed in their verdict, that Job's afflictions certainly proved him to have been a hypocrite; but they did not attack Job with this high charge, till, by the expressions of his discontent and impatience, in which they thought he reflected on God himself, he had confirmed them in the ill opinion they had before conceived of him and his character. Now they set upon him with great fear. The dispute begins, and it begins to be hot presently: the opponents are Job's three friends; Job himself is respondent, Elihu appears first as a moderator, and at length God himself gives judgment upon the controversy and the management of it. The question in dispute is, whether Job was an honest man or not? The same question that was in dispute between God and Satan in the two first chapters. Satan had yielded it, and durst not pretend that his cursing of his day was a constructive cursing of his God; no, he cannot deny but that Job still holds fast his integrity: but Job's friends will need have it, that if Job were an honest man he would not have been thus sorely and thus tediously afflicted; and therefore urge him to confess himself a hypocrite in the profession he had made of religion: No, saith Job, that I will never do; I have offended God, but my heart, notwithstanding, has been upright with him; and still he holds fast the comfort of his integrity. Eliphaz, who it is likely was the senior, or of the best quality, begins with him in this chapter: in which (1.) He bespeaks a patient hearing, ver. 2. (2.) He compliments Job with an acknowledgement of the eminency and usefulness of the profession he had made of religion, ver. 3, 4. (3.) He charges him with hypocrisy in his profession, grounding his charge upon his present troubles and his carriage under them, ver. 5, 6. (4.) To make good the inference, he maintains, that man's wickedness is that which always brings God's judgments, ver. 7—11. (5.) He corroborates his assertion by a vision which he had; in which he was minded of the incontestible purity and justice of God, and the meanness, and weakness, and sinfulness of man, ver. 12—21. By all this he aims to bring down Job's spirit, and to make him both penitent and patient under his afflictions.*

1. **THEN** Eliphaz, the Temanite, answered and said, 2. *If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?* 3. Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. 4. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. 5. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest: it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled. 6. *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?*

In these verses,

1. Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is now about to give to Job by his discourse, ver. 2. If we assay a word with thee, offer a word of reproof and counsel, wilt thou be grieved and take it ill? We have reason to fear thou wilt: but there is no remedy, *Who can refrain from words?* Observe, (1.) With what modesty he speaks of himself and his own attempt. He will not undertake the management of the cause alone, but very humbly joins his friends with him, we will commune with thee: they that plead God's cause must be glad of help, lest it suffer through their weakness. He will not promise much, but begs leave to assay or attempt, and try if he could propose any thing that might be pertinent, and suit Job's case. In difficult

matters it becomes us to pretend no further, but only to try what may be said or done. Many excellent discourses have gone under the modest title of Essays. (2.) With what tenderness he speaks of Job and his present afflicted condition; if we tell thee our mind, wilt thou be grieved? Wilt thou take it ill? Wilt thou lay it to thine own heart as thine affliction, or to our charge as our fault? Shall we be reckoned unkind and cruel, if we deal plainly and faithfully with thee? We desire we may not, we hope we shall not, and should be sorry if that should be ill reflected which is well intended. Note, We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, *Psal. lxxix. 25.* We should shew ourselves backward to say that which we foresee will be grievous, though never so necessary: God himself, though he afflicts justly, yet he doth not afflict willingly, *Lam. iii. 33.* (3.) With what assurance he speaks of the truth and pertinency of what he was about to say, *Who can withhold himself from speaking?* Surely it was a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, that laid him under this necessity of speaking: who can forbear speaking in vindication of God's honour, which we here reprove, in love to thy soul which we see endangered? Note, It is foolish pity not to reprove our friends, even our friends in affliction, for what they say or do amiss, only for fear of offending them. Whether men take it well or ill, we must with wisdom and meekness, do our duty, and discharge a good conscience.

2. He exhibits a twofold charge against Job.

1. As to his particular carriage under this affliction, he chargeth him with weakness and faint-heartedness: and that article of his charge there was too much ground for, ver. 3, 4, 5. And here,

(1.) He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. He owns that Job had instructed many, not only his own children and servants, but many others, his neighbours and friends, as many as fell within the sphere of his activity. He did not only encourage those who were teachers by office, and countenance them, and pay for the teaching of those that were poor, but he did himself instruct many; though a great man, he did not think it below him. King Solomon was a preacher: though a man of business he found time to do it, went among his neighbours, talked to them about their souls, and gave them good counsel. O that this example of Job were imitated by our great men! If he met with those that were ready to fall into sin, or sink under their troubles, his words upheld them; a wonderful dexterity he had in offering that which was proper to fortify persons against temptations, to support them under their burdens, and to comfort afflicted consciences. He had and used the tongue of the learned, knew how to speak a word in season to them that were weary, and employed himself much in that good work. With suitable counsels and comforts he strengthened the weak hands for work and service, and the spiritual warfare; and the feeble knees for the bearing up the man in his journey and under his load. It is our duty not only to *lift up our own hands that hang down*, by quickening and encouraging ourselves in the way of duty, *Heb. xii. 12.* but we must also strengthen the weak hands of others, as there is occasion, and do what we can to confirm their feeble hands, by saying, *to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong*, *1st. xxv. 2, 1.* The expressions seem to be borrowed from thence. Note, They that have abundance of spiritual riches should abound in spiritual charity. A good word, well and wisely spoken, may do more good than perhaps we think of.

But why doth Eliphaz mention this here? (1.) Perhaps he praiseth him thus for the good he had done, that he might make the intended reproof the more passable with him. Just commendation is a good preface to a just reprehension, will help to remove prejudices, and will show that the reproof comes not from ill will. Paul praised the Corinthians before he chid them, *1 Cor. xi. 7.* (2.) He remembers how Job had comforted others, as a reason why he might justly expect to be himself comforted; and yet, if conviction was necessary, in order to comfort, they must be excused if they applied themselves to that first: *the comforter shall reprove*, *John xvi. 8.* (3.) He speaks this perhaps in a way of pity, lamenting it, that, through the extremity of his affliction, he could not apply those comforts to himself which he had formerly administered to others. It is easier to give good counsel than to take it; to preach meekness and patience than to practise them. *Facile omnes, cum valemus, rectum consilium aegrotis damus.* Terent. (4.) Most think he mentions it as an aggravation of his present discontent, upbraiding him with his knowledge and the good offices he had done for others, *q. d.* Thou, that hast taught others, why dost thou not teach thyself? Is not this an evidence of thine hypocrisy, that thou hast prescribed that medicine to others which thou wilt not now take thyself, and so contradictest thyself, and attest against thine own known principles! Thou that teachest another not to faint, dost thou faint? *Rom. ii. 19.* Physician heal thyself. They, who have rebuked others, must expect to hear of it if they themselves become obnoxious to rebuke.

(2.) He upbraids him with his present low-spiritedness, ver. 5. Now it is come upon thee, now it is thy turn to be afflicted, and the bitter cup that goes round is put into thy hand; now it toucheth thee, thou faintest, thou art troubled. Here, (1.) He makes too light of Job's afflictions; it toucheth thee. The very word that Satan himself had used, *chap. i. 11. ii. 5.* Had Eliphaz felt but the one half of Job's affliction he would have said, it smites me, it wounds me; but, speaking of Job's afflictions, he makes but a flea-bite of it, it toucheth thee, and thou canst not bear to be touched; *uoli me tangere.* (2.) He makes too much of Job's repentments and aggravates them; thou faintest, or thou art beside thyself, thou ravest, and knowest not what thou sayest. Men, in deep distress, must have grains of allowance, and a favourable construction put upon what they say; when we make the worst of every word, we do not as we would be done by.

2. As to his general character before this affliction, he chargeth him with wickedness and false-heartedness; and that article of his charge was utterly groundless and unjust. How unkindly doth he banter him, and upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if they were all now come to nothing, and proved a sham, ver. 6. *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?* Doth it not all appear now to be a mere pretence? For, hadst thou been sincere in it, God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldst thou have carried thyself thus under the affliction. This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job a hypocrite, and disprove the character God had given of him: when he could not himself do this to God, but he still saw and said, *Job is perfect and upright*, then he endeavoured, by his friends, to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself an hypocrite: could he have gained that point he would have triumphed, *habes confitentem reum*: but, by the grace of God, Job was enabled to hold his own, and would not bear false witness against himself. Note, Those that pass rash and uncharitable censures upon their brethren, and condemn them for hypocrites, do Satan's work, and serve his interest more than they are aware of. I know not how it comes to pass that this verse is differently read in several editions of our common English Bibles; the original, and all the ancient versions, put *thy hope*, before the *uprightness of thy ways*. So doth the Geneva, and most of the editions of the last translation; but I find one of the first, in 1612, has it, *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways and thy hope?* Both the Assembly's Annotations and Mr. Pool's have that reading, and an edition, in 1660, reads it, *Is not thy fear thy confidence; and the uprightness*



*ness of thy ways thy hope?* Doth it not appear now that all the religion, both of thy devotion and of thy conversation, was only in hope and confidence that thou shouldest grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary? The very thing that Satan suggested. *Is not thy religion thy hope, and thy right ways thy confidence?* So Mr. Broughton. Or, was it not, Didst thou not think that would have been thy protection; but thou art deceived? Or, would it not have been so? If it had been sincere would it not have kept thee from this despair? It is true, *if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength, thy grace, is small*, Prov. xxiv. 10. but it doth not therefore follow, thou hast no grace, no strength, at all. A man's character is not to be taken from a single act.

7. Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? 8. Even as I have seen they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. 9. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed. 10. The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken. 11. The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.

Eliphaz here advanceth another argument to prove Job a hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him, but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great and extraordinary, and there being no prospect at all of his deliverance out of them.

To strengthen this argument he here lays down these two principles, which seem plausible enough.

1. That *good men were never thus ruined*, and for the proof of this he appeals to Job's own observation, *ver. 7. Remember, I pray thee*; recollect all that thou hast seen, heard, or read; and give me an instance of any one that was innocent, and righteous, and yet perished as thou dost, and was cut off as thou art. If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true, none that are innocent and righteous perish for ever: it is only a man of sin that is a *son of perdition*, 2 Thess. ii. 3. But then it is ill applied to Job; he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off: a man is never undone till he is in hell. But, if we understand it of any temporal calamity, his principle is not true. *The righteous perish*, Isa. lvii. 1. *There is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked*, Eccl. ix. 2. both in life and death; the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time (as early as it was) there were instances sufficient to contradict this principle. Did not righteous *Abel perish, being innocent*, and was not he cut off in the beginning of his days? Was not righteous Lot burnt out of house and harbour, and forced to retire to a melancholy cave? Was not righteous Jacob, a Syrian, *ready to perish*, Deut. xxvi. 5. And other such instances no doubt there were which are not on record.

2. That *wicked men were often thus ruined*: and, for the proof of this, he voucheth his own observation, *ver. 8. Even as I have seen*, many a time, *they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, by the blast of God they perish*, *ver. 9.* We have daily instances of that; and therefore, since thou dost thus perish and art consumed, we have reason to think, that whatever profession of religion thou hast made, thou hast but *ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness*. Even as I have seen in others, so do I see in thee.

1. He speaks of sinners in general, politic busy sinners, that take pains in sin, for they plough iniquity; and expect gain by sin, for they sow wickedness: they that plough, plough in hope, but what is the issue? *they reap the same*: they shall of the *flesh reap corruption and ruin*, Gal. vi. 7, 8. The harvest will be a *heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow*, Isa. xvii. 11. He shall reap the same, i. e. the proper product of that seedness: that which the sinner sows, he *sows not that body that shall be*, but God will give it a body, a body of death, *the end of those things*, Rom. vi. 21. Some, by iniquity and wickedness, understand wrong and injury done to others; they, who plough and sow that, shall reap the same, i. e. they shall be paid in their own coin. They that are troublesome shall be troubled, 2 Thess. i. 6. *Josh. vii. 25. The spoilers spoiled*, Isa. xxxiii. 1. and, that led captive, shall go captive, Rev. xiii. 10.

He farther describes their destruction, *ver. 9. By the blast of God they perish*. The projects they take so much pains in are defeated, God cuts in sunder the cords of these ploughers, Ps. cxxix. 3, 4. They themselves are destroyed; which is the just punishment of their iniquity. They perish i. e. they are destroyed utterly, they are consumed, i. e. they are destroyed gradually; and this by the blast and breath of God, i. e. (1.) By his wrath; his anger is the ruin of sinners, who are therefore called vessels of wrath, and his breath is said to kindle Tophet, *Isa. xxx. 33. who knows the power of his anger?* Ps. xc. 8. (2.) By his word: he speaks and it is done, easily and effectually. The spirit of God in the word consumes sinners, with that he slays them, *Hos. vi. 5. saying and doing are not two things with God*. The man of sin is said to be consumed with the *breath of Christ's mouth*, 2 Thess. ii. 8. compare *Isa. xi. 4. Rev. xix. 21.* Some think, in attributing the destruction of sinners to the blast of God and the breath of his nostrils, he refers to the wind which blew the house down upon Job's children, as if they were therefore *sinners above all men because they suffered such things*, Luke xiii. 2.

2. He speaks particularly of tyrants and cruel oppressors under the similitude of lions, *ver. 10, 11.* Observe, 1. How he describes their cruelty and oppression: the Hebrew tongue has five several names for lions, and they are all here used to set forth the terrible tearing power, fierceness, and cruelty, of proud oppressors: they roar, and rend, and prey upon all about them, and bring up their young ones to do so too, *Ezek. xix. 3.* The devil is a roaring lion, and they partake of his nature, and do his lusts. They are strong as lions, and subtle, *Pf. x. 9. xvii. 12.* and, as far as they prevail, lay all desolate about them.

3. How he describes their destruction; the destruction both of their power and their persons; they shall be restrained from doing farther hurt, and reckoned with for the hurt they have done. An effectual curse shall be taken, (1.) That they shall not terrify; the voice of their roaring shall be stopped. (2.) That they shall not tear; God will disarm them, will take away their power to do hurt, *the teeth of the young lions are broken*, Psal. iii. 7. Thus shall the remainder of wrath be restrained. (3.) That they shall not enrich themselves with the spoil of their neighbours. Even the old lion is famished, and perisheth for lack of prey; they that have surfeited on spoil and rapine are perhaps reduced to such straits as to die for hunger at last. (4.) That they shall not, as they promise themselves, leave a succession; the *stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad*, to seek for food themselves, which the old ones used to bring in for them, *Neh. ii. 12. The lion did tear in pieces for his whelps*, but now they must shift for themselves. Perhaps Eliphaz intended in this to reflect upon Job, as if he, being the

*greatest of all men of the east*, had got this estate by spoil; and used his power in oppressing his neighbours, but now his power and estate were gone, and his family scattered: if so, it was pity a man, whom God praised, should be thus abused.

12. Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. 13. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, 14. Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. 15. Then a spirit passed before my face, the hair of my flesh stood up. 16. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, *there was silence*, and I heard a voice, *saying*, 17. Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? 18. Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: 19. How much less on them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, *which are crushed before the moth?* 20. They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it. 21. Doth not their excellency, *which is in them*, go away? they die, even without wisdom.

Eliphaz, having undertaken to convince Job of the sin and folly of his discontent and impatience, here vouches a vision he had been favoured with, which he relates to Job for his conviction. What comes immediately from God all men will pay a particular deference to, and Job no doubt as much as any. Some think Eliphaz had this vision now lately, since he came to Job, putting words into his mouth wherewith to reason with him; and it had been well if he had kept to the purport of this vision, which would serve for a ground on which to reprove Job for his murmuring, but not to condemn him for an hypocrite. Others think he had it formerly, for God did in this way often communicate himself to the children of men in those first ages of the world, *Job xxxiii. 15.* Probably, God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other, when he was himself in an unquiet discontented frame, to calm and pacify him. Note, As we should comfort others with that wherewith we have been comforted, (2 Cor. i. 4.) so we should endeavour to convince others with that which has been powerful to convince us.

The people of God had not then any written word to quote, and therefore God sometimes notified to them even common truths, by the extraordinary ways of revelation. We that have Bibles have there (thanks be to God) a more sure word to depend upon than even visions and voices, 2 Pet. i. 9. Observe,

1. The manner how this message was sent to Eliphaz, and the circumstances of the conveyance of it to him. (1.) It was brought him secretly, or by stealth: some of the sweetest communion gracious souls have with God is in secret, where no eye sees but he that is all eye. God has ways of bringing conviction, counsel, and comfort, to his people, unobserved by the world, by private whispers, as powerfully and effectually as by the public ministry. *His secret is with them*, Psal. xxv. 14. As the evil spirit often steals good words out of the heart, *Matt. xiii. 19.* so the good spirit sometimes steals good words into the heart, or ever we are aware. (2.) *He received a little thereof*, *ver. 12.* And it is but little of divine knowledge that the best receive in this world: we know little in comparison with what is to be known, and with what we shall know when we come to heaven. *How little a portion is heard of God!* Job. xxvi. 14. *We know but in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. See his humility and modesty. He pretends not to have understood it fully, but something of it he perceived. (3.) It was brought him in the visions of the night, *ver. 13.* When he was retired from the world and the hurry of it, and all about him was composed and quiet. Note, The more we are withdrawn from the world, and the things of it, the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are *communing with our own hearts, and are still*, (Psal. iv. 4.) then is a proper time for the Holy Spirit to commune with us. When others were asleep, Eliphaz was ready to receive this visit from heaven; and, probably, like David, was *meditating upon God in the night watches*; in the midst of good thoughts this thing was brought to him. We should hear more from God if we thought more of him; yet some are surprised with convictions in the night, *Job. xxxiii. 14, 15.* (4.) It was prefaced with terrors; *fear came upon him, and trembling*, *ver. 14.* It should seem, before he either heard or saw any thing, he was seized with this trembling, which shook his bones, and perhaps the bed under him. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty being struck upon his spirit, he was thereby prepared for a divine visit. Whom God intends to honour, he first humbles and lays low, and will have us all to serve him with holy fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

2. The messenger by whom it was sent, a spirit, one of the good angels, who are employed not only as the ministers of God's providence, but sometimes as the ministers of his word. Concerning this apparition, which Eliphaz saw, we are here told, *ver. 15, 16.* (1.) That it was real, and not a dream; not a fancy: an image was before his eyes, he plainly saw it; at first it passed and repassed before his face, moved up and down, but at length it stood still to speak to him. If some have been so knavish as to impose false visions on others, and some so foolish as to be themselves imposed upon, it doth not therefore follow but that there have been apparitions of spirits, both good and bad. (2.) That it was indistinct, and somewhat confused. He could not discern the form thereof, so as to frame any exact idea of it in his own mind, much less to give a description of it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, not his curiosity gratified. We know little of spirits, we are not capable of knowing much of them, nor is it fit we should; all in good time, we must shortly remove to the world of spirits, and shall then be better acquainted with them. (3.) That it put him into a mighty consternation, so that his hair stood on end. Ever since man sinned, it has been terrible to him to receive an express from heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence; apparitions therefore, even of good spirits, have always made deep impressions of fear, even upon good men. How well is it for us that God sends us his messages not by spirits! but by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid? See *Dan. vii. 28. x. 8, 9.*

3. The message itself: before it was delivered there was silence; profound silence, *ver. 16.* When we are to speak either from God, or to him, it becomes us to address ourselves to it with a solemn pause, and so to set bounds about the mount on which God is to come down, and not be hasty to utter any thing. It was in a still small voice that the message was delivered, and this was it, *ver. 17. Shall mortal man be more just than God, the immortal God? Shall a man be thought to be, or pretend to be more pure than his Maker?* Away with such a thought! (1.) Some think Eliphaz aims hereby



hereby to prove that Job's great afflictions were a certain evidence of his being a wicked man: a mortal man would be though unjust, and very impure, if he should thus correct and punish a servant or subject, unless he had been guilty of some very great crime; if, therefore, these were not some great crimes for which God thus punisheth thee, man would be more just than God, which is not to be imagined. (2.) I rather think it is only a reproof of Job's murmuring and discontent; shall a man pretend to be more just and pure than God? more truly to understand and more strictly to observe the rules and laws of equity than God? Shall Enosh, mortal, miserable man, be so insolent; nay, shall Geber, the strongest and most eminent man; man, at his best estate, pretend to compare with God, or stand in competition with him! Note, It is most impious and absurd to think either others or ourselves more just and pure than God. Those that quarrel and find fault with the directions of the divine law, the dispensations of the divine grace, or the disposals of the divine Providence, make themselves more just and pure than God; and they, who thus reprove God, let them answer it. What! sinful man, (for he had not been mortal if he had not been sinful,) short-sighted man, shall he pretend to be more just more pure than God; man, being his Maker, is his lord and owner! shall the clay contend with the potter? What justice and purity there is in man, God is the author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure. See *Psal.* xciv. 9, 10.

4. The comment which Eliphaz makes upon this, for so it seems to be; yet some take all the following verses to be spoken in vision. It comes all to one.

1. He shews how little the angels themselves are in comparison with God, *ver.* 18. Angels are God's servants, waiting servants, working servants, they are his ministers, *Psal.* civ. 4. bright and blessed beings they are, but God neither needs them, nor is benefited by them, and is himself infinitely above them; and therefore, (1.) He puts no trust in them, did not repose a confidence in them, as we do in those we cannot live without; there is no service in which he employs them, but, if he pleased, he could have it done as well without them. He never made them his confidants, or of his cabinet-council. *Mat.* xxiv. 36. He doth not leave his business wholly to them, but *his own eyes run to and fro through the earth*, 2 *Chron.* xvi. 9. See this phrase, *Job* xxxix. 11. Some give this sense of it, so mutable is even the angelical nature, that God would not trust them with their own integrity; if he had, they would all have done, as some did, left their first estate, but he saw it necessary to give them a supernatural grace to confirm them. (2.) He chargeth them with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with God. If the world were left to the government of the angels, and they were trusted with the sole management of affairs, they would take false steps, and every thing would not be done for the best, as now it is. Angels are intelligences; but finite ones. Though not chargeable with iniquity, yet with imprudence. This last clause is variously rendered by the critics. I think it would bear this reading, repeating the negation, which is very common. He will put no trust in his saints, *nor will he glory in his angels, or make his boast of them*, as if their praises or services added any thing to him: it is his glory that he is infinitely happy without them. *In angelis suis non ponet gloriationem.*

2. Thence he infers how much less man is, how much less to be trusted in or gloried in: if there be such a distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is represented here in his meanness.

1. Look upon man in his life, and he is *very mean*, *ver.* 19. Take man in his best estate, and he is a very despicable creature in comparison with the holy angels, though honourable if compared with the brutes. It is true, angels are spirits, and the souls of men are spirits; but (1.) Angels are pure spirits, the souls of men dwell in houses of clay; such the bodies of men are. Angels are free, human souls are housed, and the body is a cloud, a clog to it, it is its cage, it is its prison. It is a house of clay, mean and mouldering; an earthen vessel, soon broken, as it was first formed according to the good pleasure of the potter. It is a cottage, not a house of cedar, or a house of ivory, but of clay, which would soon be in ruins if not kept in constant repair. (2.) Angels are fixed, but the very foundation of that house of clay in which man dwells, is in the dust. A house of clay, if built upon a rock, might stand long; but, if founded in the dust, the uncertainty of the foundation will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. As man was made out of the earth, so he is maintained and supported by that which comes out of the earth. Take away that, and his body returns to its earth. We stand but upon the dust; some have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others; but still it is the earth that stays us up, and will shortly swallow us up. (3.) Angels are immortal, but man is soon crushed; the earthly house of his tabernacle dissolved, he dies and wastes away; is crushed like a moth between one's fingers, as easily, as quickly: one may almost as soon kill a man as kill a moth. A little thing will do it, he is *crushed before the face of the moth*; so the word is. If some lingering distemper, which consumes like a moth, be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than he can resist an acute distemper that comes roaring upon him like a lion. See *Ios.* v. 12—14. Is such a creature as this to be trusted in, or can any service be expected from him, by that God who puts no trust in angels themselves?

2. Look upon him in his death and he appears yet more despicable and unfit to be trusted. Men are mortal, and dying, *ver.* 20, 21. (1.) In death they are destroyed, and perish for ever, as to this world; it is the final period of their lives, and all their employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more. (2.) They are dying daily, and continually waiting; *destroyed from morning to evening*; death is still working in us, *like a mole digging our grave at each remove*, and, we so continually lie exposed, that we are killed all the day long. (3.) Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off; it last perhaps but from morning to evening. It is but a day, (so some understand it;) their birth and death are but the sun-rise and sun-set of the same day. (4.) In death all their excellency passeth away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death, but dies with them; nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power, defend after them. (5.) Their wisdom cannot save them from death, they die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth. (6.) It is so common a thing, that no body heeds it, or takes any notice of it; they perish *without any regarding it*, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought.

Some think the eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of as well as their temporal death. *They are destroyed, or broken to pieces by death, from morning to evening; and, if they repent not, they perish for ever*; so some read it, *ver.* 20. they perish for ever, because they regard not God and their duty, they consider not their latter end, *Lam.* i. 9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away, and they die, they die the second death, for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying creature as this pretend to be *more just than God, and more pure than his Maker*? No, instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him admire he is out of hell.

## C H A P. V.

Eliphaz, in the foregoing chapter, for the making good of his charge against Job, had vouched a word from heaven, sent him in a vision. In this chapter he appeals to those that bear record on earth, to the saints, the faithful witnesses of God's truths, in all ages, *ver.* 1. *they will testify*, (1.) That the sin of sinners is their ruin, *ver.* 2—5. (2.) That yet affliction is the common lot of mankind, *ver.* 6, 7. (3.) That, when we are in affliction, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God, for he is able and ready to help us, *ver.* 8—16. (4.) That the afflictions which are borne well will end well; and Job particularly, if he would come to a better temper, might assure himself that God had great mercy in store for him, *ver.* 17—27. So that he concludes his discourse in somewhat a better humour than he began it.

1. **C**ALL now, if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn? 2. For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one. 3. I have seen the foolish taking root: but suddenly I cursed his habitation. 4. His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them. 5. Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.

A very warm dispute being begun between Job and his friends, Eliphaz here makes a fair motion to put the matter to a reference; and in all debates perhaps the sooner that is done the better, if the contenders cannot end it between themselves: and so well assured is Eliphaz of the goodness of his own cause, that he moves Job himself to choose the arbitrators, *ver.* 1. *Call now, if there be any that will answer thee, i. e.* (1.) If there be any that suffer as thou sufferest; canst thou produce an instance of any one that was really a saint, that was reduced to such extremity as thou art now reduced to? God never dealt with any that love his name so as he deals with thee, and therefore sure thou art none of them. (2.) If there be any that say as thou sayest: did ever any good man curse his day as thou dost? Or, will any of the saints justify thee in these heats or passions, or say, that these are the spots of God's children? thou wilt find none of the saints that will be either thine advocates or mine antagonists. *To which of the saints wilt thou turn?* Turn to which thou wilt, and thou wilt find they are all of my mind; I have the *communis sensus fidelium*, the unanimous vote of all the saints on my side, they will all subscribe to what I am going to say. See *Job* xxxiv. 8.

Observe, (1.) Good people are called saints, even in the Old Testament; and therefore I know not why we should in common speaking (unless because we must *loqui cum vulgo*) appropriate the title to those of the New Testament, and not say St. Abraham, and St. Moses, and St. Isaiah, as well as St. Matthew and St. Mark; and St. David the psalmist as well as St. David the British bishop. Aaron is expressly called the *saint of the Lord*. (2.) All that are themselves saints will turn to those that are so, will choose them for their friends and converse with them; will choose them for their judges and consult with them. See *Psal.* cxix. 79. *The saints shall judge the world*, 1 *Cor.* vi. 1, 2. *Walk in the way of good men*, *Prov.* ii. 20. *the old way, the footsteps of the flock*. Every one chooseth some sort of people or other to whom he studies to recommend himself, and by whose sentiments he reckons honour and dishonour: now all true saints endeavour to recommend themselves to those that are so, and to stand right in their opinion. (3.) There are some truths so plain and so universally known and believed, that one may venture to appeal to any of the saints concerning them. However there are some things about which they unhappily differ, there are many more, and more considerable, in which they are agreed; as the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the worth of the soul, the necessity of a holy life, and the like. Though they do not all live up as they should to their belief of these truths, yet they are all ready to bear their testimony to them.

Now there are two things which Eliphaz here maintains, and doubts not but all the saints concur with him.

1. That the sin of sinners directly tends to their own ruin, *ver.* 2. *Wrath kills the foolish man*, his own wrath doth it, and therefore he is foolish for indulging it; it is a fire in his bones, in his blood, enough to have put him into a fever; and envy is the rottenness of the bones, and so slays the silly one that frets himself with it. So it is with thee, faith Eliphaz, while thou quarrest with God, thou dost thyself the greatest mischief; thine anger at thine own troubles, and thine envy at our prosperity, doth but add to thy pain and misery: turn to the saints, and thou wilt find they understand themselves better. Job had told his wife she spake as the foolish women; now Eliphaz tells him he acted as the foolish men, the silly ones. Or it may be meant thus: If men are ruined and undone, it is always their own folly that ruins and undoes them. They kill themselves by some lust or other; therefore, no doubt, Job, thou hast done some foolish thing, by which thou hast brought thyself into this calamitous condition. Many understand it of God's wrath and jealousy. Job needed not be uneasy at the prosperity of the wicked, for the world's smiles can never shelter them from God's frowns; they are foolish and silly if they think they will. God's anger and indignation will be the death, the eternal death, of those on whom it fastens: What is hell, but that without mixture or period?

2. That their prosperity is short and their destruction certain, *ver.* 3, 4, 5. He seems here to parallel Job's case with that which is commonly the case of wicked people.

1. Job had prospered for a time, seemed confirmed, and was secure in his prosperity, and it is common for foolish wicked men to do so. *I have seen them taking root*, planted, and in their own and others apprehensions fixed and likely to continue. See *Jer.* xii. 2 *Psal.* xxxvii. 35, 36. We see worldly men taking root in the earth, on earthly things they fix the standing of their hopes, and from them they draw the sap of their comforts: the outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth.

2. Job's prosperity was now at an end, and so has the prosperity of other wicked people quickly been.

1. Eliphaz foresaw the ruin with an eye of faith. They, who looked only at present things blessed their habitation, and thought them happy, blessed it long, and wished themselves in their condition: but Eliphaz cursed it, suddenly cursed it, as soon as he saw them begin to take root, *i. e.* he plainly foresaw and foretold their ruin; not that he prayed for it, *I have not desired the woeful day*, but he prognosticated it: *He went into the sanctuary*, and there *understood their end*, and heard their doom read, *Psal.* lxxiii. 17, 18. *That the prosperity of fools will destroy them*, *Prov.* i. 32. They, who believe the word of God can see a curse in the house of the wicked,



wicked, Prov. iii. 33. though it be never so finely and firmly built, and never so full of all good things, and can foresee that it will in time infallibly consume it, with the timber thereof and the stones thereof, *Zech. v. 4.*

2. He saw at length what he had foreseen; he was not disappointed in his expectation concerning him, the event answered it; his family was undone, and his estate ruined. In which particulars he plainly and very indignantly reflects on Job's calamities. (1.) His children were crushed, *ver. 4.* They thought themselves safe in their eldest brother's house, but were far from safety, for they were crushed in the gate; perhaps the door or gate of the house was highest built, and fell heaviest upon them, and there was none to deliver them from perishing in the ruins. This is commonly understood of the destruction of the families of wicked men, by the execution of justice upon them, to oblige them to restore what they have ill got. They leave it to their children, but the descent shall not bar the entry of the rightful owners, who will crush their children, and cast them by due course of law, and there shall be none to help them: or perhaps by oppression, *Psal. cix. 9, &c.* (2.) His estate was plundered, *ver. 5.* Job's was so; the hungry robbers, the Sabeans and Chaldeans, ran away with it, and swallowed it, and this, I have often observed in others. What has been got by spoil and rapine has been lost the same way. The careful owner hedged it about with thorns, and then thought it safe, but the fence proved insignificant against the greediness of the spoilers; if hunger will break through stone walls, much more through thorn hedges; and against the divine curse, which will go through the thorns and briers, and burn them together, *Isa. xxvii. 4.*

6. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground: 7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. 8 I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: 9. Which doth great things, and unsearchable: marvellous things without number, 10. Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: 11. To set on high those that be low; that those, which mourn, may be exalted to safety. 12. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. 13. He taketh the wife in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. 14. They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon day as in the night. 15. But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty. 16. So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

Eliphaz, having touched Job in a very tender part, in mentioning both the loss of his estate and the death of his children as the just punishment of his sin, that he might not drive him to despair here begins to encourage him, and puts him in a way to make himself easy. Now he doth very much change his voice, (allude to *Gak. iv. 20.*) and speaks Job fair, as if he would atone for the hard words he had given him.

1. He minds him, that no affliction comes by chance, nor is to be attributed to second causes. It doth not come forth of the dust, nor spring out of the ground, as the grass doth, *ver. 6.* It doth not come of course at certain seasons of the year, as natural productions do, by a chain of second causes. The proportion between prosperity and adversity is not so exactly observed by Providence as that between day and night, summer and winter, but according to the will and counsel of God, when and as he thinks fit. Some read it, *Sin comes not forth of the dust, nor iniquity out of the ground.* If men be bad, they must not lay blame upon the soil, the climate, or the stars, but on themselves. *If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* We must not attribute our afflictions to fortune, for they are from God; nor our sins to fate, for they are from ourselves; so that, whatever trouble we are in, we must own that God sends it upon us, and we prosecute it to ourselves: the former is a reason why we should be very patient, the latter why we should be very penitent, when we are afflicted.

2. He minds him, that trouble and affliction is what we have all reason to expect in this world. *Man is born to trouble,* *ver. 7.* Not as a man; had he kept his innocence he had been born to pleasure; but as sinful man, as *born of a woman,* *Job xiv. 1.* who was in the transgression: man is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. Even those that are born to honour and estate yet are born to trouble in the flesh. In our fallen state, it is become natural to us to sin, and the natural consequence of that is affliction, *Rom. v. 12.* There is nothing in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upward. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption; and, being called *transgressors from the womb,* no wonder that we deal very treacherously, *Isa. xlvi. 8.* And such is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles also thence arise as naturally as the sparks fly upward! so many are they, so thick and so fast doth one follow another: why then should we be surprised at our afflictions as strange; or quarrel with them as hard, when they are but what we are born to? Man is born to labour, so it is in the margin; is sentenced to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, which should inure him to hardness, and make him bear his afflictions the better.

3. He directs him how to behave himself under his affliction, *ver. 8.* *I would seek unto God;* surely I would: so it is in the original. Here is, (1.) A tacit reproof to Job for not seeking to God, but quarrelling with him: Job, if I had been in thy case, I would not have been so peevish and passionate as thou art, I would have acquiesced in the will of God. It is easy to say what we would do if we were in such a one's case; but, when it comes to the trial, perhaps it will be found not so easy to do as we say. (2.) Very good and seasonable advice to him, which Eliphaz transfers to himself in a figure: for my part, the best way I should think I could take, if I were in thy condition, would be to apply myself to God. Note, We should give our friends no other counsel but what we would take ourselves if we were in their case; that we may be easy under our afflictions, may get good by them, and may see a good issue of them. (1.) We must, by prayer, fetch in mercy and grace from God: seek to him as a father and friend, though he contend with us, as one who is alone able to support and succour us; his favour we must seek when we have lost all we have in the world; to him we must address ourselves, as the fountain and father of all good, all consolation. *Is any afflicted, let him pray.* It is heart's ease, a salve for every sore. (2.) We must, by patience, refer ourselves and our cause to him. *To God would I commit my cause:* having spread it before him, I would leave it with him; having laid it at his feet, I would lodge

it in his hand; *Here am I, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good.* If our cause be indeed a good cause, we need not fear committing it to God, for he is both just and kind: They that would seek, so as to speed, must refer themselves to God.

4. He encourageth him thus to seek God and commit his cause to him: it will not be in vain to do so; for he is one in whom we shall find effectual help. Two things in God he recommends to his consideration:

1. God's almighty power and sovereign dominion. In general, he doth great things, *ver. 9.* great indeed; for he can do any thing, he doth do every thing; and all according to the counsel of his own will. Great indeed; for the operations of his power are, (1.) Unsearchable, and such as can never be fathomed, can never be found out, *from the beginning of the end,* *Ecc. iii. 11.* The works of nature are mysteries, the most curious searches come far short of full discoveries, and the wisest philosophers have owned themselves at a loss: the designs of Providence are much more deep and unaccountable, *Rom. xi. 33.* (2.) Numerous, and such as can never be reckoned up: he doth great things without number; his power is never exhausted, nor will all his purposes ever be fulfilled till the end of time. (3.) They are marvellous, and such as can never be sufficiently admired, eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. Now, by the consideration of this, Eliphaz intends, (1.) To convince Job of his fault and folly in quarrelling with God: we must not pretend to pass a judgment upon his work, for they are unsearchable and above our inquiries; nor must we strive with our Maker, for he will certainly be too hard for us, and is able to crush us in a moment. (2.) To encourage Job to seek unto God, and to refer himself to him: what more encouraging than to see that he is one to whom power belongs? He can do great things and marvellous for our relief, when we are brought never to low.

He gives some instances of God's dominion and power.

1. God doth great things in the kingdom of nature; he gives rain upon the earth, *ver. 10.* put here for all the gifts of common providence, all the fruitful seasons by which he filleth our hearts with food and gladness, *Acts xiv. 17.* Observe, when he would shew what great things God doth, he speaks of his giving rain, which, because it is a common thing we are apt to look upon as a little thing; but, if we duly consider how it is produced, and what is produced by it, we shall see it to be a great work, both of power and goodness.

2. He doth great things in the affairs of the children of men. Not only enricheth the poor and comforts the needy by the rain he sends, *ver. 10.* but, in order to the advancing of those that be low, he disappoints the devices of the crafty; for *ver. 11.* is to be joined to *ver. 12.* and compared with *Luke i. 51, 52, 53.* He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and hath exalted them of low degree, and filled the hungry with good things.

See 1. How he frustrates the counsels of the proud and politic, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* There is a supreme power that manageth and over-ruleth men that think themselves free and absolute, and fulfils its own purposes in despite of their projects. Observe, (1.) The froward that walk contrary to God and the interests of his kingdom, are often very crafty, for they are the seed of the old serpent, that was noted for his subtilty: they think themselves wise, but at their end will be fools. (2.) The froward enemies of God's kingdom have their devices, their enterprises, and their counsels, against it, and against the loyal faithful subjects of it. They are restless and unwearied in their designs, close in their consultations, high in their hopes, deep in their politics, and fast linked in their confederacies, *Psal. ii. 1, 2.* (3.) God easily can and (as far as is for his glory) certainly will blast and defeat all the designs of his and his peoples enemies. How were the plots of Abithophel, Sanballat, and Haman, baffled! The confederacies of Syria and Ephraim against Judah, of Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, against God's Israel, the kings of the earth, and the princes, against the Lord and against his anointed, broken! The hands that have been stretched out against God and his church have not performed their enterprise, nor have the weapons formed against Sion prospered. (4.) That which enemies have designed for the ruin of the church has often turned to their own ruin, *ver. 13.* He taketh the wife in their own craftiness, and snarls them in the work of their own hands, *Psal. vii. 15, 16.* ix. 15, 16. This is quoted by the apostle, *1 Cor. iii. 19,* to show how the learned men of the heathen were beguiled by their own vain philosophy. (5.) When God infatuates men they are perplexed and at a loss, even in those things that seem most plain and easy, *ver. 14.* They meet with darkness, even in the day time: nay, as it is in the margin, they run themselves into darkness by the violence and precipitation of their own counsels. See *chap. xii. 20, 24, 25.*

2. How he favours the cause of the poor and humble, and espouseth that.

1. He exalteth the humble, *ver. 11.* Those, whom proud men contrive to crush, he raiseth from under their feet, and sets them in safety, *Psal. xii. 5.* The lowly in heart, and those that mourn, he advanceth, he comforteth, and makes them to dwell on high, in the munitions of rocks, *Isa. xxxiii. 16.* Sion's mourners are the sealed ones, marked for safety, *Ezek. ix. 4.*

2. He delivereth the oppressed, *ver. 15.* The designs of the crafty were to ruin the poor: tongue, and hand, and sword, and all, are at work in order to this; but God takes them under his special protection; who, being poor and unable to help themselves, being his poor, and devoted to his praise, have committed themselves to him. He saves them from the mouth that speaks hard things against them, and the hand that doth hard things against them; for he can, when he pleases, tie the tongue and wither the hand.

And the effect of this is, *ver. 16.* (1.) That weak and timorous saints are comforted: *So the poor has hope,* that began to despair: the experiences of some are encouragements to others to hope the best in the worst of times, for it is the glory of God to send help to the helpless and hope to the hopeless. (2.) That daring threatening sinners are confounded; iniquity stops her mouth, being surprised at the strangeness of the deliverance, ashamed of its enmity against those who appear to be the favourites of heaven, mortified at the disappointment, and compelled to acknowledge the justice of God's proceedings, having nothing to object against them. Those that hectored God's poor, that frightened them, menaced them, and falsely accused them, will not have a word to say against them when God appears for them. See *Psal. lxxvi. 8, 9.* *Isa. xxvi. 11.* *Mic. vii. 16.*

17. Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: 18. For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole, 19. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. 20. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and, in war, from the power of the sword. 21. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither



neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. 22. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. 23. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. 24. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. 25. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. 26. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. 27. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.

Eliphaz, in this concluding paragraph of his discourse, gives Job (what he himself knew not how to take) a comfortable prospect of the issue of his afflictions, if he did but recover his temper and accommodate himself to them.

Observe, 1. The seasonable word of caution and exhortation that he gives him, *ver. 17. Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.* Call it a chastening which comes from the father's love, and is designed for the child's good: call it the chastening of the Almighty, with whom it is madness to contend: to whom it is wisdom and duty to submit, and who will be a God all-sufficient (for so the word signifies) to all those that trust in him. Do not despise it; it is a copious word in the original. (1.) Be not averse to it: let grace conquer the antipathy which nature has to suffering, and reconcile thyself to the will of God in it: we need the rod, and we deserve it, and therefore we ought not to think it either strange or hard if we feel the smart of it. Let not the heart rise against a bitter pill or potion, when it is prescribed us for our good. (2.) Do not think ill of it, do not put it from you, as that which is either hurtful, or at least not useful; which there is no occasion for nor advantage by, only because for the present it is not joyous but grievous. We must never scorn to stoop to God, nor think it a thing below us to come under his discipline, but reckon, on the contrary, that God really magnifies man when he thus visits and tries him, Job vii. 17, 18. (3.) Do not overlook and disregard it, as if it were only a chance, and the product of secondary causes, but take great notice of it as the voice of God and a messenger from heaven. More is implied than is expressed: *Reverence the chastening of the Lord*; have an humble awful regard to his correcting hand, and tremble when the lion roars, *Amos iii. 8.* Submit to the chastening, and study to answer the call; to answer the end of it, and then you reverence it. When God, by an affliction, draws upon us for some of the effects he has intrusted us with, we must honour his bill by accepting it, and, subscribing it, resigning him his own when he calls for it.

2. The comfortable words of encouragement which he gives him, thus to accommodate himself to his condition, and (as he himself had expressed it) to receive evil from the hand of God, and not to despise it as a gift not worth the accepting. If his affliction were thus borne,

1. The nature and property of it would be altered: though it looked like a man's misery, it would really be his bliss: *Happy is the man whom God correcteth*, if he make but a due improvement of the correction. A good man is happy though he be afflicted; for, whatever he has lost, he has not lost his enjoyment of God nor his title to heaven; nay, he is happy because he is afflicted; correction is an evidence of his sonship and a means of his sanctification; it mortifies his corruptions, weans his heart from the world, draws him nearer to God, brings him to his Bible, brings him to his knees, works him for, and so is working for him, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: *Happy, therefore, is the man whom God correcteth*, Jam. i. 12.

2. The issue and consequence of it would be very good, *ver. 18.* (1.) Though he maketh sore the body with sore bites, the mind with sad thoughts, yet he bindeth up at the same time, as the skilful tender surgeon binds up the wounds he had occasion to make with his incision-knife. When God makes sores by the rebukes of his providence, he binds up, by the consolations of his spirit, which oftentimes abound most as afflictions do abound, and balance them to the unspeakable satisfaction of the patient sufferers. (2.) Though he wounds, yet his hands make whole in due time; as he supports his people, and makes them easy under their afflictions, so in due time, he delivers them, and makes a way for them to escape. All is well again; and he comforts them according to the time wherein he afflicted them. God's usual method is first to wound, and then to heal; first to convince, and then to comfort; first to humble, and then to exalt; and (as Mr. Caryl observes) he never makes a wound too great, too deep, for his own cure. *Una eademque manus vulnus aperitque tulit.* God tears the wicked, and goes away; let them heal that will, if they can, *Hof. v. 14.* but the humble and penitent may say, *He has torne, and he will heal us*, *Hof. vi. 1.*

This is general; but, in the following verses, he applies himself directly to Job, and gives him many precious promises of great and kind things which God would do for him, if he did but humble himself under his hand. Though then they had no Bibles, that we know of, yet Eliphaz had sufficient warrant to give Job these assurances, from the general discoveries God had made of his good will to his people. And though in every thing which Job's friends said, they were not directed by the Spirit of God, for they spake both of God and Job some things that were not right, yet the general doctrines they laid down spake the pious sense of the patriarchal age, and as St. Paul quoted, *ver. 13.* for canonical scripture, and the command, *ver. 17.* is no doubt binding to us; so these promises here may be, and must be, received and applied as divine promises; and we may, *through patience and comfort of this part of scripture, have hope.*

Let us therefore give diligence to make sure our interest in these promises, and then view the particulars of them, and take the comfort of them.

1. It is here promised, *that, as afflictions and troubles do recur, supports and deliverances shall be graciously repeated*, be it never so often. *In six troubles* he shall be ready to deliver thee; *yea, and in seven.* This intimates, that as long as we are here in this world we must expect a succession of troubles, that the clouds will return after the rain: after six troubles may come a seventh. After many look for more, but out of them all will God deliver those that are his, *2 Tim. iii. 11.* *Psal. xxxiv. 19.* Former deliverances are earnest of, not, as among men, excuses from, further deliverances, *Prov. xix. 19.*

2. That, whatever troubles good men may be in, there shall no evil touch them, they shall do them no real harm; the malignity of them shall be taken out, they shall be unstung; they may hiss, they cannot hurt, *Psal. xci. 10.* The evil one toucheth not God's children, *1 John v. 18.* Being kept from sin, they are kept from the evil of every trouble.

3. That, when desolating judgments are abroad, they shall be taken under special protection, *ver. 20.* Do many perish about them for want of the necessary supports of life? they shall be supplied: *in famine he shall redeem thee from death*; whatever becomes of others, thou shalt be kept alive, *Psal. xxxiii. 19.* Verily thou shalt be fed, nay, even in the days of famine thou shalt be satisfied, *Psal. xxxvii. 3—19.* In time of war, when thousands fall on thy right and left hand, he shall redeem thee from the power of the sword: if God pleaseth, it shall not touch thee, or if it wound thee, if it kill thee, it shall not hurt thee; it can but kill the body, nor has it power to do that unless it be given from above.

4. That, whatever is maliciously said against them, it shall not affect them, to do them any hurt, *ver. 21.* Thou shalt not only be protected from the killing sword of war, but shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue; which, like a scourge, is vexing and painful, though not mortal. The best men and the most inoffensive cannot, even with their innocency, secure themselves from calumny, reproach, and false accusation: from these a man cannot hide himself, but God can hide him, so that the most malicious slanders shall be so little heeded by him as not to disturb his peace; and so little heeded by others as not to blemish his reputation: and the remainder of his wrath God can and doth restrain; for it is owing to the hold he hath of the consciences of bad men that the scourge of the tongue is not the ruin of all the comforts of good men in this world.

5. That they shall have a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from their hope and confidence in God, even in the worst of times. When dangers are most threatening they shall be easy, believing themselves safe; and shall not be afraid of destruction, no, not when they see it coming, *ver. 21.* nor of the beasts of the field, when they set upon them, or of men as cruel as beasts; nay, *at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh*, *ver. 22.* not so as to despise any of God's chastenings, or make a jest of his judgments, but so as to triumph in God and his power and goodness, and therein to triumph over the world and all its grievances; to be not only easy, but cheerful and joyful, in tribulation. Blessed Paul laughed at destruction, when he said, *O death, where is thy sting!* when, in the name of all the saints, he defied all the calamities of this present time to separate us from the love of God; concluding, that in all these things we are more than conquerors, *Rom. viii. 35, &c.* See *Isa. xxxvii. 22.*

6. That, being at peace with God, there shall be a covenant of friendship between them and the whole creation, *ver. 23.* When thou walkest thy grounds thou shalt not need to fear stumbling, for thou shalt be at league with the stones of the field, not to dash thy foot against any of them; nor shalt thou be in danger from the beasts of the field, for they all shall be at peace with thee: compare *Hof. ii. 18.* *I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field.* This implies, that while man is at enmity with his Maker, the inferior creatures are at war with him; but, *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*, our covenant with God is a covenant with all the creatures, that they shall do us no hurt, but be ready to serve us, and do us good.

7. That their houses and families shall be comfortable to them, *ver. 24.* Peace and piety in the family will make it so: thou shalt know and be assured that thy tabernacle is and shall be in peace, mayest be confident both of the present and future prosperity of it. That peace is thy tabernacle, so the word is, they that dwell in God, and are at home in him, peace is the house in which they dwell; thou shalt visit, i. e. inquire into the affairs of thy habitation, and take a review of them, and shalt not sin. (1.) God will provide a settlement for his people, mean perhaps and moveable, a cottage, a tabernacle, but a fixed and quiet habitation. Thou shalt not sin or wander, i. e. as some understand it, thou shalt not be a fugitive and a vagabond, Cain's curse, but shalt dwell in the land, and verily, not uncertainly as vagrants, shalt thou be fed. (2.) Their families shall be taken under the special protection of the divine Providence, and shall prosper as far as it is for their good. (3.) They shall be assured of peace and of the continuance and entail of it; thou shalt know to thine unspeakable satisfaction, that peace is sure to thee and thine, having the word of God for it: providence may change, but the promise cannot. (4.) They shall have wisdom to govern their families aright, to order their affairs with discretion, and to look well to the ways of their household, which is here called visiting their habitation; masters of families must not be strangers at home, but have a watchful eye over what they have, and what their servants do. (5.) They shall have grace to manage the concerns of their families after a godly sort, and not to sin in the management of them: they shall call their servants to account without pride, passion, covetousness, worldliness, or the like; look into their affairs without discontent at what is, or distrust of what shall be. Family piety crowns family peace and prosperity: the greatest blessing, both in our employments and in our enjoyments, is to be kept from sin in them. When we are abroad, it is comfortable to hear that our tabernacle is in peace, and, when we return home, to visit our habitation with satisfaction in our success, that we have not miscarried in our business, and with a good conscience that we have not offended God.

8. That their posterity shall be numerous and prosperous. Job had lost all his children; but, saith Eliphaz, if thou return to God, he will again build up thy family, and thy seed shall be many, and as great as ever thou wast, and thine offspring increasing and flourishing as the grass of the earth, (*ver. 25.*) and thou shalt know it. God has blessings in store for the seed of the faithful, which they shall have if they do not stand in their own light and forfeit them by their folly. It is a comfort to parents to see the prosperity, especially the spiritual prosperity of their children; if they are truly good they are truly great, how small a figure forever they make in the world.

9. That their death shall be seasonable, and they shall finish their course at length with joy and honour, *ver. 26.* It is a great mercy; (1.) To live to a full age, and not to have the number of our months cut off in the midst. If the providence of God do not give us long life, if the grace of God give us to be satisfied with the time allotted us we may be said to come to a full age. That man lives long enough that has done his work, and is fit for another world. (2.) To be willing to die, to come cheerfully to the grave, and not to be forced thither, as he whose soul was required of him. (3.) To die seasonably, as the corn is cut and housed when it is full ripe; not till then; but then not suffered to stand a day longer, lest it shed. Our times are in God's hand; it is well they are so; for he will take care that those, who are his, die in the best time: however their death may seem to us untimely, it will be found not unseasonable.

In the last verse he recommends those promises to Job, (1.) As faithful sayings, which he might be confident of the truth of: *Lo, this we have searched, and so it is.* We have indeed received these things by tradition from our fathers, but we have not taken them upon trust, we have carefully searched them, have compared spiritual things with spiritual; have diligently studied them, and been confirmed in our belief of them from our own observation and experience; and we are all of a mind that so it is. Truth is a treasure that is well worth digging for, diving for; and then we shall know both how to value it ourselves and how to communicate it to others, when we have taken pains in searching it. (2.) As well worthy of all



all acceptance, which he might improve to his great advantage! "Hear it, and know thou it for thy good!" It is not enough to hear and know the truth, but we must improve it, and be made wiser and better by it; receive the impressions of it, and submit to the commanding power of it. Know it for thyself, so the word is; with application to thyself and thy own case: not only this is true, but this is true concerning me. That which we thus hear, and know for ourselves, we hear and know for our good, as the meat we digest we are nourished by. And that is indeed a good sermon that doth us good.

## C H A P. VI.

*Eliphaz concluded his discourse with an air of assurance; very confident he was, that what he had said was so plain and so pertinent that nothing could be objected in answer to it. But, though he that is first in his own cause seemeth just, yet his neighbour comes and searcheth him: Job is not convinced by all he had said, but still justifies himself in his complaints, and condemns him for the weakness of his arguing. (1.) He shews that he had just cause to complain, as he did, of his troubles; and so it would appear to any impartial judge, ver. 2—7. (2.) He continues his passionate wish, that he might speedily be cut off by the stroke of death, and so be eased of all his miseries, ver. 8—13. (3.) He reproves his friends for their uncharitable censures of him and the unkind treatment they gave him, ver. 14—30. It must be owned that Job in all this spoke a deal of reason, but with a mixture of passion and human infirmity: And in this contest, as indeed in most contests, there was fault on both sides.*

1. **B**UT Job answered and said, 2. Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! 3. For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up. 4. For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. 5. Doth the wild ass bray when he has grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder? 6. Can that which is unfavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? 7. The thing that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.

Eliphaz, in the beginning of his discourse, had been very sharp upon Job, and yet it doth not appear that Job gave him any interruption, but heard him patiently till he had said all he had to say: they that would make an impartial judgment of a discourse must hear it out and take it entire. But, when he had concluded, he makes his reply, in which he speaks very feelingly.

1. He represents his calamity in general as much heavier than either he had expressed it or they had apprehended it, ver. 2, 3. He could not fully describe it; they would not fully apprehend it, or at least not own that they did. And therefore he would gladly appeal to a third person, that had but just weights and just balances with which to weigh his grief and calamity, and would do it with an impartial hand; he wished that they would set his grief in one scale, and all the expressions of it; his calamity in the other, and all the particulars of it; and (though he would not altogether justify himself in his grief, yet) they would find, as he saith, chap. xxiii. 2. that his stroke was heavier than his groaning; for, whatever his grief was, his calamity was heavier than the sand of the sea; it was complicated, it was aggravated; every grievance weighty, and altogether numerous as the sand: therefore (saith he) my words are swallowed up; i. e. therefore you must excuse both the brokenness and the bitterness of my expressions; therefore do not think it strange if my speech be not so fine and polite as that of an eloquent orator, or so grave and regular as that of a morose philosopher: no; in these circumstances I can pretend neither to the one nor to the other, my words are, as I am, quite swallowed up.

Now, (1.) He hereby complains of it, as his unhappiness, that his friends undertook to administer spiritual physic to him before they thoroughly understood his case and knew the worst of it. It is seldom that those, who are at ease themselves, rightly weigh the afflictions of the afflicted; every one feels most from his own burden, few feel from other peoples. (2.) He excuseth the passionate expressions he had used when he cursed his day. Though he could not himself justify all he had said, yet he thought his friends should not thus violently condemn it, for really the case was extraordinary; and that might be connived at, in such a man of sorrows as he now was, which in any common grief would by no means be allowed of. (3.) He bespeaks the charitable and compassionate sympathy of his friends with him, and hopes, by representing the greatness of his calamity, to bring them to a better temper towards him. To those that are pained, it is some ease to be pitied.

2. He complains of the trouble and terror of mind he was in as the worst part of his calamity, ver. 4. Herein he was a type of Christ; who, in his sufferings, complained most of the sufferings of his soul; now is my soul troubled, John xii. 27. My soul is exceeding sorrowful, Matt. xxvi. 37, 38. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matt. xxvii. 46. Poor Job sadly complains here, (1.) Of what he felt: the arrows of the Almighty are within me. It was not so much the troubles themselves he was under that put him into this confusion, his poverty, disgrace, and bodily pain, but that which cut him to the heart, and put him into this mighty toils, was, to think that the God he loved and served had brought all this upon him and laid him under these marks of his displeasure. Note, Trouble of mind is the worst trouble: a wounded spirit who can bear! Whatever burden of affliction, in body or estate, God is pleased to lay upon us, we may well afford to submit to it as long as he continues to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences; but, if in either of these we be disturbed, our case is sad indeed and very piteous. The way to prevent God's fiery darts of trouble is, with the shield of faith, to quench Satan's fiery darts of temptation. Observe, He calls them the arrows of the Almighty; for it is an instance of the power of God above that of any man, that he can, with his arrows, reach the soul. He that made it can make his sword to approach to it. The poison or heat of these arrows is said to drink up his spirit, because it disturbed his reason, shook his resolution, exhausted his vigour, and threatened his life; and therefore his passionate expressions, though they could not be justified, yet might be excused. (2.) Of what he feared. He saw himself charged by the terrors of God as by an army set in battle-array, and surrounded by them: God, by his terrors, fought against him: as he had no comfort when he retired inward into his own bosom, so he had none when he looked upward

towards heaven. He, that used to be encouraged with the consolations of God, not only wanted those, but was amazed with the terrors of God.

3. He reflects upon his friends for their severe censures of his complaints and their unskillful management of his case. (1.) Their reproofs were causeless. He complained, it is true, now he was in this affliction, but he never used to complain as those do, who are of a fretful unquiet spirit; when he was in prosperity, he did not bray when he had grass, nor low over his fodder, ver. 5. But, now he was utterly deprived of all his comforts, he must be a stock or a stone, and not have the sense of an ox or a wild ass, if he did not give some vent to his grief. He was forced to eat unfavoury meats, and was so poor he had not a grain of salt wherewith to relish them, nor to give a little taste to the white of an egg, which was now the choicest dish he had at his table, ver. 6. And even that food which, when time was, he would have scorned to touch, now he was glad of, and it was his sorrowful meat, ver. 7. Note, It is wisdom not to use ourselves or our children to be nice and dainty about meat and drink, because we know not how we or they may be reduced, nor how that, which we now disdain, may be made acceptable by necessity.

(2.) Their comforts were senseless and insipid; so some understand, ver. 6, 7. He complains he had nothing now offered him for his relief that was proper for him; no cordial, nothing to revive and cheer his spirits: what they had offered was in itself as tasteless as the white of an egg; and, when applied to him, as loathsome and burdensome as the most sorrowful meat. I am sorry he should say thus of what Eliphaz had excellently well said, chap. v. 8, &c. But peevish spirits are too apt thus to abuse their comforters!

8. O that I might have my request! and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! 9. Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand and cut me off. 10. Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden my self in sorrow; let him not spare, for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One. 11. What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life? 12. Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? 13. Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?

Ungoverned passion often grows more violent when it meets with some rebuke and check: the troubled sea rages most when it dasheth to a rock. Job had been courting death, as that which would be the happy period of his miseries, chap. iii. For this Eliphaz had gravely reproved him; but he, instead of unsaying, saith it here again with more vehemence than before, and it is as ill said as almost any thing we meet with in all his discourses; and is recorded for our admonition, not our imitation.

1. He is still most passionately desirous to die, as if it were not possible that he should ever see good days again in this world, or that, by the exercise of grace and devotion, he might make even these days of affliction good days: he could see no end of his trouble but death, and had not patience to wait the time appointed for that. He has a request to make; there is a thing he longs for, ver. 8. And what is that? One would think it should be, that it would please God to deliver me, and restore me to my prosperity again; no; that it would please God to destroy me, ver. 9. As once he let loose his hand to make me poor, and then to make me sick, let him loose it once more to put an end to my life. Let him give the fatal stroke, it shall be to me the coup de grace, as in France they call the last blow which dispatches them that are broken on the wheel. There was a time when destruction from the Almighty was a terror to Job, chap. xxxi. 23. Yet now he courts the destruction of the flesh, but in hopes that the spirit should be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Observe, Though Job was extremely desirous of death, and very angry at its delays, yet he did not offer to destroy himself, nor to take away his own life, only he begged that it would please God to destroy him. Seneca's Morals, which recommend self-murder as the lawful redress of insupportable grievances, were not then known, nor will be ever entertained by any that have the least regard to the law of God and nature. How uneasy soever the soul's confinement in the body may be, it must by no means break prison, but wait for a fair discharge.

2. He puts this desire into a prayer, that God would grant him this request, that it would please God to do this for him. It was his sin so passionately to desire the hastening of his own death, and offering up that desire to God made it no better; nay, what looked ill in his wish looked worse in his prayer; for we ought not to ask any thing of God but what we can ask in faith; and we cannot ask any thing in faith but what is agreeable to the will of God. Passionate prayers are the worst of passionate expressions, for we should lift up pure hands without wrath.

3. He promiseth himself effectual relief and the redress of all his grievances by the stroke of death, ver. 10. Then should I yet have comfort, which now I have not, nor ever expect till then. See, (1.) The vanity of human life: so uncertain a good is it, that oftentimes it proves men's greatest burden, and nothing so desirable as to get clear of it. Let grace make us willing to part with it whenever God calls: for it may so happen that even sense may make us desirous to part with it before he calls. (2.) The hope which the righteous have in their death. If Job had not had a good conscience he could not have spoken with this assurance of comfort on the other side death, which turns the tables between the rich man and Lazarus, now he is comforted and thou art tormented.

4. He challengeth death to do its worst. If he could not die without the dreadful prefaces of bitter pains, and agonies, and strong convulsions; if he must be racked before he be executed; yet in prospect of dying at last, he would make nothing of dying pangs. I would harden myself in sorrow, would open my breast to receive death's darts, and not shrink from them; let him not spare, I desire no mitigation of that pain which will put a happy period to all my pains. Rather than not die, let me die so as to feel myself die. These are passionate words, which might better have been spared. We should soften ourselves in sorrow, that we may receive the good impressions of it, and, by the sadness of the countenance, our hearts, being made tender, may be made better; but, if we harden ourselves, we provoke God to proceed in his controversy; for, when he judgeth, he will overcome. And it is great presumption to dare the Almighty, and to say, let him not spare, for are we stronger than he? 1 Cor. x. 32. We are much indebted to sparing mercy: it is bad indeed with us when we are sick of that. Let us rather say with David, Spare me a little.

5. He grounds his comfort upon the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had been faithful and firm to his profession of religion, and some way useful and serviceable to the glory of God in his generation. I have not concealed the words of the Holy One. Observe, 1. Job had the words of



of the Holy One committed to him. The people of God were at that time blessed with divine revelation. 2. It was his comfort that he had not concealed them, had not received the grace of God therein in vain. (1.) He had not kept them from himself, but had given them full scope to operate upon him, and in every thing to guide and govern him. He had not stifled his convictions, *imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness*, nor done any thing to hinder the digestion of this spiritual food and the operation of this spiritual physic. Let us never conceal God's word from ourselves, but always receive it in the light of it. (2.) He had not kept them to himself, but had been ready on all occasions to communicate his knowledge for the good of others; was never ashamed or afraid to own the word of God to be his rule, nor remiss in his endeavours to bring others into an acquaintance with it. Note, Those, and those only, may promise themselves comfort in death who are good and do good while they live.

6. He justifies himself in this extreme desire of death, from the deplorable condition he was now in, *ver. 11, 12*. Eliphaz, in the close of his discourse, had put him in hopes that he should yet see a good issue of his troubles; but poor Job puts these cordials away from him, refuseth to be comforted, abandons himself to despair, and very ingenuously, yet perverfely, argues against the encouragements that were given him. Disconsolate spirits will reason strangely against themselves. In answer to the pleasing prospects Eliphaz had flattered him with, he intimates,

(1.) That he had no reason to expect any such thing. *What is my strength that I should hope?* You see how I am weakened and brought low, how unable I am to grapple with my distempers, and therefore what reason have I to hope that I should out-live them and see better days? *Is my strength the strength of stones?* Are my muscles brass, and sinews steel? No, they are not, and therefore I cannot hold out always in this pain and misery, but must needs sink under the load. Had I strength to grapple with my distemper I might hope to look through it; but, alas! I have not, the *weakening of my strength in the way* will certainly be the *shortening of my days*, *Psalm ciii. 23*. Note, All things considered, we have no reason to count upon the long continuance of life in this world. *What is our strength?* It is depending strength, we have no more strength than God gives us: for, in him we live and move: it is decaying strength; we are daily spending upon the quick stock of it; and, by degrees, it will be exhausted. It is disproportionate to the encounters we may meet with; *what is our strength to be depended upon when two or three days sickness will make us as weak as water?* Instead of expecting a long life, we have reason to admire that we have lived hitherto, and to see ourselves hastening off apace.

(2.) That he had no reason to desire any such thing: *What is my end, that I should desire to prolong my life?* What comfort can I promise myself in life comparable to the comfort I promise myself in death? Note, Those that, through grace, are ready for another world, cannot see much to invite their stay in this world, or to make them fond of it. That, if it be God's will, we may do him more service, and may get to be fitter and riper for heaven, is an end for which we may wish the prolonging of life, in subserviency to our chief end: but, otherwise, what can we propose to ourselves in desiring to tarry here? The burdens of life will be ever the longer the more grievous, *Ecclesiastes xii. 1*. And the delights of life will be ever the longer the less pleasant, *2 Samuel xix. 34*. We have already seen the best of this world, but we are not sure that we have seen the worst of it.

7. He obviates the suspicion of his being delirious, *ver. 13*. *Is not help in me?* i. e. have I not the use of my reason, with which, I thank God, I can help myself, though you do not help me? Do you think wisdom is driven quite from me, and that I am gone distracted? No, I am not mad most noble Eliphaz, but *speaking the words of truth and soberness*. Note, Those, who have grace in them, who have the evidence of it, and have it in exercise, have wisdom in them, which will be their help in the worst of times. *Sat lucis intus*.

14. To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend: but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty. 15. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away: 16. Which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid: 17. What time they wax warm they vanish: when it is hot they are consumed out of their place. 18. The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish. 19. The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them. 20. They were confounded because they had hoped; they came hither and were ashamed. 21. For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down and are afraid.

Eliphaz had been very severe in his censures of Job; and his companions, though as yet they had said little, yet had intimated their concurrence with him; their unkindness therein poor Job here complains of as an aggravation of his calamity, and a farther excuse of his desire to die; for what satisfaction could he ever expect in this world, when those, that should be his comforters, thus proved his tormentors?

1. He shews what reason he had to expect kindness from them. His expectation was grounded upon the common principle of humanity, *ver. 14*. To him that is afflicted, and that is wasting and melting under his affliction, pity should be shewn from his friend; and he that doth not shew that pity forsaketh the fear of the Almighty. Note, 1. Compassion is a debt owing to those that are in affliction. The least which those that are at ease can do, for those that are pained and in anguish, is to pity them; to manifest the sincerity of a tender concern for them and sympathize with them; to take cognizance of their case, inquire into their grievances, hear their complaints, and mingle our tears with theirs; to comfort them and do all we can to help and relieve them: this well becomes the members of the same body, who should feel from the grievances of their fellow-members, not knowing how soon the same may be their own. 2. Inhumanity is impiety and irreligion. *He that withholdeth compassion from his friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty*. So the Chaldee. *How dwells the love of God in that man?* 1 John iii. 17. Surely those have no fear of the rod of God upon themselves who have no compassion for those that feel the smart of it. See *Jam. i. 27*. 3. Troubles are the trials of friendship. When a man is afflicted he will see who are his friends indeed and who are but pretenders, for a brother is born for adversity, *Prov. xvii. 17, xviii. 24*.

2. He shews how wretchedly he was disappointed in his expectations from them, *ver. 15*. My brethren, who should have helped me, have dealt deceitfully as a brook. They came, by appointment, with a great deal of ceremony, to mourn with him and to comfort him, *chap. ii. 11*. and some mighty things were expected from such great men, such good men, such

wise, learned, knowing, men, and Job's particular friends; none questioned but that the drift of their discourses would be to comfort Job with the remembrance of his former piety, the assurance of God's favour to him, and the prospect of a glorious issue; but, instead of this, they most barbarously fall upon him with their reproaches and censures; condemn him as a hypocrite, insult over his calamities, and pour vinegar instead of oil into his wounds; and thus they dealt deceitfully with him. Note, 1. It is fraud and deceit not only to violate our engagements to our friends, but to frustrate their just expectations from us, especially the expectations we have raised. 2. It is our wisdom to cease from man; we cannot expect too little from the creature nor too much from the Creator. It is no new thing even for brethren to deal deceitfully, *Jer. ix. 4, 5*. *Mic. vii. 5*. let us therefore put our confidence in the Rock of ages, not in broken reeds; in the Fountain of life, not in broken cisterns. God will out-do our hopes as much as men come short of them.

This disappointment, which he met with, he here illustrates by the failing of brooks in summer.

1. The similitude is very elegant, *ver. 15—20*. (1.) Their pretensions are fitly compared to the great flow which the brooks make when they are swelled with the waters of a land-flood, by the melting of the ice and snow, which makes them blackish or muddy, *ver. 16*. (2.) His expectations from them, which their coming so solemnly to comfort him had raised, he compares to the expectation, which the weary thirsty travellers have, of finding water in the summer there where they have often seen it in great abundance in the winter, *ver. 19*. The troops of Tema and Sheba, the caravans of the merchants of those countries, whose road lay through the deserts of Arabia, looked and waited for supply of water from those brooks; Hard by here, faith one, a little farther, faith another, when I last travelled this way, there was water enough; we shall have that to refresh us. Where we have met with relief and comfort, we are apt to expect it again; and yet it doth not follow: for, (3.) The disappointment of his expectation is here compared to the confusion which seizeth the poor travellers when they find heaps of sand where they expected floods of water. In the winter, when they were not thirsty, there was water enough: every one will applaud and admire those that are full and in prosperity: but, in the heat of summer, when they needed water, then it failed them, was consumed, *ver. 17*. it was turned aside, *ver. 18*. When those that are rich and high are sunk and impoverished, and stand in need of comfort, then those that before gathered about them stand aloof from them, that before commended them are forward to run them down: thus they that raise their expectations high from the creature will find it fail them then when it should help them; whereas they that make God their confidence have help in the time of need, *Heb. iv. 16*. They that make gold their hope, sooner or later, will be ashamed of it, and of their confidence in it, (*Ezek. vii. 19*.) and, the greater their confidence was, the greater their shame will be; they were confounded because they had hoped, *ver. 20*. We prepare confusion for ourselves by our vain hopes: the reeds break under us, because we lean upon them. If we build a house upon the sand, we shall certainly be confounded; for it will fall in the storm, and we must thank ourselves for being such fools as to expect it would stand. We are not deceived, unless we deceive ourselves.

2. The application is very close, *ver. 21*. *For now ye are nothing*. They seemed to be somewhat; but in conference they added nothing to him. Allude to *Gal. ii. 6*. He was never the wiser, never the better, for the visit they made him. Note, Whatever complacency we may take, or whatever confidence we may put in creatures, how great soever they may seem, and how dear soever they may be to us, one time or other we shall say of them, *Now ye are nothing*. When Job was in prosperity, his friends were something to him; he took complacency in them and their society: but now ye are nothing; now I can find no comfort but in God. It were well for us if we had always such convictions of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to make us happy, as we have sometimes had, or shall have, on a sick-bed, a death-bed, or in trouble of conscience. *Now you are nothing*. You are not what you have been, what you should be, what you pretend to be, what I thought you would have been; for you see my casting-down, and are afraid. When you saw me in my elevation, you caressed me; but, now you see me in my dejection, you are shy of me, are afraid of shewing yourselves kind, lest I should take the boldness from thence to beg something of you, or to borrow; (compare *ver. 22*.) are afraid lest, if you own me, you should be obliged to keep me. Perhaps they were afraid of catching his distemper, or of coming within finell of the noisomeness of it. It is not good, either out of pride or niceness, for love of our purses or of our bodies, to be shy of those in distress, and afraid of coming near them. Their case may soon be our own.

22. Did I say, bring unto me? or give a reward for me of your substance? 23. Or deliver me from the enemies hand? or redeem me from the hand of the mighty? 24. Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. 25. How forcible are right words! but what doth our arguing reprove? 26. Do you imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind? 27. Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and you dig a pit for your friend. 28. Now therefore be content; look upon me; for it is evident unto you, if I lie. 29. Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea return again; my righteousness is in it. 30. Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?

Poor Job goes on here to upbraid his friends with their unkindness and the hard usage they gave him. He here appeals to themselves concerning several things which tended both to justify him and condemn them. If they would but think impartially, and speak as they thought, they could not but own.

1. That, though he was necessitous, yet he was not craving, nor burdensome to his friends; those that are so, whose troubles serve them to beg by, are commonly less pitied than the silent poor. Job would be glad to see his friends, but he did not say, *Bring unto me*, *ver. 22*. or *Deliver me*, *ver. 23*. He did not desire to put them to any expence, did not send abroad to urge his friends either, (1.) To make a collection for him, to set him up again in the world, though he could plead that his losses came upon him by the hand of God, and not by any fault or folly of his own; that he was utterly ruined and impoverished; that he had lived in good fashion, and when he had wherewithal, was charitable and ready to help those that were in distress; that his friends were rich and able to help him; yet he did not say, *Give me of your substance*. Note, A good man, when troubled himself, is afraid



afraid of being troublesome to his friends. Or, (2.) To raise the country for him, to help him to recover his cattle out of the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or to make reprisals upon them: Did I send for you to deliver me out of the hand of the mighty? No, I never expected you should either expose yourselves to any danger, or put yourselves to any charge, upon my account: I will rather sit down content under my affliction, and make the best of it, than sponge upon my friends. St. Paul worked with his hands, that he might not be burdensome to any. Job's not asking their help did not excuse them from offering it when he needed it and it was in the power of their hands to give it; but it much aggravated their unkindness, when he desired no more from them but a good look and a good word, and yet could not obtain that. From man, oftentimes, even when we expect little, yet we have less; but, from God, even when we expect much, yet we have more, *Eph. iii. 20.*

2. That, though he differed in opinion from them, yet he was not obstinate, but ready to yield to conviction, and to strike sail to truth, as soon as ever it was made to appear to him that he was in an error, *ver. 24, 25.* If, instead of invidious reflections and uncharitable insinuations, you will give me plain instructions and solid arguments, that shall carry their own evidence along with them, I am ready to acknowledge my error and own myself in a fault. *Teach me and I will hold my tongue;* for I have often found, with pleasure and wonder, *how forcible right words are:* But the method you take will never make profelytes; *what doth your arguing reprove?* Your hypothesis is false, your surmises groundless, your management weak, and your application peevish and uncharitable. Note, 1. Fair reasoning has a commanding power, and it is a wonder if men are not conquered by it; but railing and foul language is impotent and foolish, and it is no wonder if men are exasperated and hardened by it. 2. It is the undoubted character of every honest man, that he is truly desirous to have his mistakes rectified, and to be made to understand wherein he has erred; and that right words, when they appear to him to be so, though contrary to his former sentiments, are both forcible and acceptable.

3. That, though he had been indeed in a fault, yet they ought not to have given him such hard usage, *ver. 26, 27.* Do you imagine, or contrive with a great deal of art, (for so the word signifies,) to reprove words, some passionate expressions of mine in this desperate condition, as if they were certain indications of reigning impiety and atheism? A little candour and charity would have served to excuse them, and to put a better construction upon them. Shall a man's spiritual state be judged of by some rash and hasty words, which a surprising trouble extorts from him? Is it fair? is it kind? is it just, to criticise in such a case? Would you yourselves be served thus? Two things aggravated their unkind treatment of him. (1.) They took advantage of his weakness and the helpless condition he was in. *Ye overwhelm the fatherless;* a proverbial expression, speaking that which is most barbarous and inhuman. The fatherless cannot secure themselves from insults; which emboldens men of base and fardil spirits to insult them and trample upon them; and you do so by me. Job, being a childless father, thought himself as much exposed to injury as a fatherless child. (*Psal. cxxvii. 5.*) and had reason to take it ill of those who therefore triumphed over him. Let those, who overwhelm and overpower, then that upon any account may be looked upon as fatherless, know that therein they not only put off the compassions of man, but fight against the compassions of God, who is, and will be, a father of the fatherless, and a helper of the helpless. (2.) That they made pretence of kindness; *You dig a pit for your friend:* not only you are unkind to me who am your friend; but, under colour of friendship, you ensnare me. When they came to see and sit with him, he thought he might speak his mind freely to them, and that, the more bitter his complaints to them were, the more they would have endeavoured to comfort him: this made him take a greater liberty than otherwise he would have done. David, though he smothered his resentments when the wicked were before him, it is likely would have given vent to them if none had been by but friends, *Psal. xxxix. 1.* But this freedom of speech, which their professions of concern for him made him use, had exposed him to their censures, and so they might be said to dig a pit for him. Thus, when our hearts are hot within us, what is ill done we are apt to misrepresent, as if done designedly.

4. That, though he had let fall some passionate expressions, yet for the main he was in the right; and that his afflictions, though very extraordinary, did not prove him to be a hypocrite or wicked man. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let it go.

For the evincing of it, he here appeals,

1. To what they saw in him, *ver. 28.* *Be content, and look upon me;* What do you see in me that speaks me either a mad man or an ill man? Nay, look in my face, and you may discern there the indications of a patient and submissive spirit, for all this. Let the shew of my countenance witness for me, that, though I have cursed my day, I did not curse my God. Or rather, look upon my ulcers and sore bites, and by them it will be evident to you that I do not lie; i. e. that I do not complain without cause. Let your own eyes convince you that my condition is very sad, and I do not quarrel with God, by making it worse than it is.

2. To what they heard from him, *ver. 30.* You hear what I have to say now: *Is there iniquity in my tongue?* That iniquity that you charge me with? Have I blasphemed God, or renounced him? Are not my present arguments right? Do not you perceive, by what I say, that I can discern perversities? I can discover your fallacies and mistakes; and if I were myself in an error, I could perceive it: Whatever you think of me I know what I say.

3. To their own second and sober thoughts, *ver. 29.* *Return. I pray you;* consider the thing over again without prejudice and partiality, and let not the result be iniquity; let it not be an unrighteous sentence; and you will find my righteousness is in it; i. e. I am in the right in this matter; and that, though I cannot keep my temper as I should, I keep my integrity, and have not said, or done, or suffered, any thing which will prove me other than an honest man. A just cause desires nothing more than a just hearing, and, if need be, a re-hearing.

## C H A P. VII.

Job in this chapter, goes on in expressing the bitter sense he had of his calamities, and to justify himself in his desire of death. (1.) He complains to himself and his friends of his troubles and the constant toils he was in, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) He turns to God, and expostulates with him, *ver. 7.* and sinem. In which (1.) He pleads the final period which death puts to our present state, *ver. 7—10.* (2.) He passionately complains of the miserable condition he was now in, *ver. 11—16.* (3.) He wonders God will thus contend with him, and begs for the pardon of his sins and a speedy release out of his miseries, *ver. 17—11.* It is hard to methodize the speeches of one who owned himself almost desperate, chap. vi. 26.

1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?*  
2. As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as

an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: 3. So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. 4. When I lie down, I say when shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. 5. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome; 6. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.

Job is here excusing what he could not justify, even in his inordinate desire of death. Why should he not wish for the period of life, which would be the period of his miseries? To enforce this reason, he argues,

1. From the general condition of man upon earth, *ver. 1.* He is of few days, and full of trouble. Every man must die quickly, and every man has some reason (more or less) to desire to die quickly; and therefore why should you impute it to me as so heinous a crime, that I wish to die quickly? Or thus: Pray mistake not my desires of death, as if I thought the time appointed of God could be anticipated: no, I know very well that is fixed only in such language, as that. I take the liberty to express my present uneasiness. *Is there not an appointed time (a warfare, so the word is) to man upon earth? and are not his days here like the days of an hireling?* Observe,

1. Man's present place: he is upon earth, which God has given to the children of men, *Plat. cxv. 16.* This speaks man's meanness and inferiority: how much below the inhabitants of yonder elevated and refined regions above is he situated! It also speaks God's mercy to him: he is yet upon the earth, not under it; on earth, not in hell. Our time on earth is limited and short, according to the narrow bounds of this earth; but heaven cannot be measured, nor the days of heaven numbered.

2. His continuance in that place: Is there not a time appointed for his abode here? Yes, certainly, there is; and it is easy to say by whom the appointment is made; even by him that made us and set us here. We are not to be on this earth always, nor long, but for a certain time, which is determined by him in whose hand our times are. We are not to think that we are governed by the blind fate of the Stoics, or by the blind fortune of the Epicureans; but by the wise, holy, and sovereign counsel of God.

3. His condition during that continuance: Man's life is a warfare, and as the days of an hireling. We are every one of us to look upon ourselves in this world, (1.) As soldiers exposed to hardship, and in the midst of enemies; must serve and be under command; and, when our warfare is accomplished, we must be cashiered and disbanded, dismissed either with shame or honour, according to what we have done in the body. (2.) As day-labourers that have the work of the day to do in its day, and must make up their account at night.

2. From his own condition at this time. He had as much reason, he thought to wish for death, as a poor servant or hireling that is tired with his work has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall receive his penny and go to rest, *ver. 2.* As welcome as the light of the morning is to the watchman, *Psal. cxxx. 6.* as the darkness of the night is to the labourer. The God of nature has provided for the repose of labourers, and no wonder they desire it. *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet,* *Ecc. v. 12.* No pleasure more grateful, more relishing, to the luxurious, than rest to the laborious; nor can any rich man take so much satisfaction in the return of his rest-days as the hireling in his day's wages. The comparison is plain, the reddition is concise and somewhat obscure; but we must supply a word or two, and then it is easy: exactness of language is not to be expected from one in Job's condition. As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, so and for the same reason I earnestly desire death: for I am made to possess, &c. Hear his complaint:

1. His days are useless, and had been so a great while; he was wholly taken off from business, and utterly unfit for it. Every day was a burden to him, because he was in no capacity of doing good, or of spending it to any purpose. *Et vitæ partem non attigit ullam.* He could not fill up his time with any thing that would turn to account; and this he calls possessing months of vanity, *ver. 3.* It very much increaseth the affliction of sickness and age, to a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much upon it that they are days in which he has no pleasure, as that they are days in which he doth no good; on that account they are months of vanity: but, when we are disabled to work for God, if we will but sit still quietly for him, it is all one; we shall be accepted.

2. His nights were restless, *ver. 3, 4.* The night relieves the toil and fatigue of the day not only to the labourers, but to the sufferers: if a sick man can but get a little sleep in the night it helps nature, and it is hoped he shall do well, *John xi. 12.* However, be the trouble what it will, sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, and griefs, that afflict us: it is the parenthesis of our sorrows; but poor Job could not gain this relief. (1.) His nights were wearisome; and, instead of taking any rest, he did but tire himself more with tossing to and fro until morning: Those that are in great uneasiness, through pain of body or anguish of mind, think, by changing sides, changing places, changing postures, to get some ease; but, while the cause is the same within, it is all to no purpose: it is but a resemblance of a fretful discontented spirit, that is ever shifting, but never easy. This made him dread the night as much as the servant desires it, and, when he lay down, to say, *When will the night be gone?* (2.) These wearisome nights were appointed to him: God, who determines the times before appointed, had allotted him such nights as these. Whatever is at any time grievous to us, it is good to see it is appointed for us, that we may acquiesce in the event, not only as unavoidable because appointed, but as therefore designed for some holy end. When we have comfortable nights, we must see them also appointed to us, and be thankful for them: many, better than we, have wearisome nights.

3. His body was noisome, *ver. 5.* His sores bred worms; the scabs were like clods of dust; and his skin was broken: so evil was the disease which cleaved fast unto him. See what vile bodies we have, and what little reason we have to pamper them or be proud of them: they have in themselves the principles of their own corruption. As soon as we are of them now, the time may come when we may loathe them and long to get rid of them. Modern searches have discovered multitudes of worms in human bodies.

4. His life was hastening apace towards a period, *ver. 6.* He thought he had no reason to expect a long life; for he found himself declining fast, *ver. 6.* *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,* i. e. my time is now but short, and there are but few sands more in my glass, which will speedily run out. Natural motions are more swift near the centre: Job thought his days ran swiftly, because he thought he should soon be at his journey's end; he looked upon them as good as spent already, and he was therefore without hope of being restored to his former prosperity. It is applicable to man's life in general: our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown



thrown from one side of the web to the other in the twinkling of an eye, and then back again, to and fro, until at length it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried, and then we cut off, like a weaver, our life, Isa. xxxviii. 12. Time hastens on apace: the motion of it cannot be stopped, and when it is past it cannot be recalled. While we are living, we are sowing; (Gal. vi. 8.) so we are weaving; every day, like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it; many weave the spider's web, which will fail them, Job viii. 14. If we are weaving to ourselves holy garments and robes of righteousness, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed; and every man shall reap as he sowed, and wear as he wove.

7. O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. 8. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not. 9. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. 10. He shall return no more to his house; neither shall his place know him any more. 11. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit: I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. 12. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me? 13. When I say, My bed shall comfort me; my couch shall ease my complaint; 14. Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions. 15. So that my soul chooseth strangling and death rather than life. 16. I lothe it; I would not live alway: let me alone: for my days are vanity.

Job, observing perhaps that his friends, though they would not interrupt him in his discourse, yet began to grow weary, and not to heed much what he said, here turns to God, and speaks to him. If men will not hear us, God will; if men cannot help us, he can; for his arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy. Yet we may not go to school to Job here; to learn how to speak to God: for it must be confessed there is a great mixture of passion and corruption in what he here saith; but, if God be not extreme to mark what his people say amiss, let us also make the best of it. Job is here begging of God either to ease him or end him.

He here represents himself to God,

1. As a dying man, surely and speedily dying. It is good for us, when we are sick, to think and speak of death: for sickness is sent on purpose to put us in mind of it; and if we be duly mindful of it ourselves, we may in faith put God in mind of it, as Job doth here, ver. 7. O remember that my life is wind. He recommends himself to God as an object of his pity and compassion, with this consideration, that he was a very weak, frail, creature; his abode in this world short and uncertain; his removal out of it sure and speedy; and his return to it again impossible and never to be expected: that his life was wind, as the lives of all men are; noisy, perhaps, and blustering, like the wind, but vain and empty, soon gone, and, when gone, past recall. God had compassion on Israel, remembering that they were but flesh, a wind that puffeth away and cometh not again, Psal. lxxviii. 38, 39. Observe,

(1.) The pious reflections Job makes upon his own life and death. Such plain truths as these, concerning the shortness and vanity of life, the unavoidable and irrecoverableness of death, then do us good when we think and speak of them with application to ourselves. Let us consider then,

1. That we must shortly take our leave of all the things that are seen, that are temporal. The eye of the body must be closed, and shall no more see good, the good which the most of men set their hearts upon; for their cry is, *Who will make us to see good?* Psalm iv. 6. If we be such fools as to place our happiness in visible good things, what will become of us when they shall be for ever hid from our eyes, and we shall no more see good? Let us therefore live by that faith which is the substance and evidence of things not seen.

2. That we must then shortly remove to an invisible world: *The eye of him that hath here seen me shall see me no more* there. It is *Adieu*, an unseen state, ver. 8. Death removes our lovers and friends into darkness, Psal. lxxxviii. ult. and will shortly remove us out of their sight: when we go hence, we shall be seen no more, Psal. xxxix. ult. but go to converse with the things that are not seen, that are eternal.

3. That God can easily and in a moment put an end to our lives, and send us to another world, ver. 8. *Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not*; thou canst look me into eternity, frown me into the grave, when thou pleasest.

*Shouldst thou, displeas'd, give me a frowning look,  
I sink, I die, as if with lightning struck.*

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

He takes away our breath, and we die; nay, he but looks upon the earth, and it trembleth, Psal. civ. 29—32.

4. That when we are once removed to another world, we must never return to this. There is constant passing from this world to the other, but no repassing. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*. Therefore, Lord, shew me kindness when I am here; for I shall return no more to receive kindness in this world: or therefore, Lord, be so kind as to ease me by death; for that will be a perpetual ease; I shall return no more to the calamities of this life. When we are dead, we are gone to return no more. (1.) From our house under ground, ver. 9. *He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more*, until the general resurrection; shall come up no more to his place in this world. Dying is work that is to be done but once, and therefore it had need be well done: an error there is past retrieve. This is illustrated by the blotting out and scattering of a cloud. It is consumed and vanisheth away; is dissolved into air, and never knits again: other clouds arise, but the same cloud never returns: so a new generation of the children of men is raised up; but the former generation is quite consumed and vanisheth away. When we see a cloud which looketh great, as if it would eclipse the sun and drown the earth, on a sudden dispersed and disappearing, say, Just such a thing is the life of man; it is a vapour that appears for a little while, and then vanisheth away. (2.) To return no more to our house above ground, ver. 10. He shall return no more to his house, to the possession and enjoyment of it, to the business and delights of it: others will take possession and keep it, till they also resign to another generation. The rich man in hell desired Lazarus might be sent to his house, knowing it was to no purpose to ask that he might have leave to go himself. Glorified saints shall return no more to the cares, and burdens, and sorrows, of their house;

nor damned sinners to the gaieties and pleasures of their house. Their place shall no more know them, no more own them, have no more acquaintance with them, nor be any more under their influence. It concerns us to secure a better place when we die; for this will no more own us.

(2.) The passionate inference he draws from it. From these premises he might have drawn a better conclusion than he doth, ver. 11. *Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak, I will complain*. Holy David, when he had been meditating on the frailty of human life, made a contrary use of it, Psal. xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth*; but Job, finding himself near expiring, hastens as much to make his complaint, as if he had been to make his last will and testament, or as if he could not die in peace until he had given vent to his passion. When we have but a few breaths to draw, we should spend them in the holy, gracious, breathings of faith and prayer, not in the noisome, noxious, breathings of sin and corruption. Better die praying and praising, than die complaining and quarrelling.

2. As a disordered man, sorely and grievously disordered, both in body and mind. In this part of his representation he is very peevish, as if God dealt hardly with him, and laid upon him more than was meet. *Am I a sea or a whale?* ver. 12. A raging sea, that must be restrained by force from devouring all the fishes of the sea? Am I so strong that there needs so much ado to hold me? so boisterous that no less than all these mighty bonds of affliction will serve to tame me and keep me within compass? We are very apt, when we are in affliction, to complain of God and his providence, as if he laid more restraint upon us than there is occasion for: whereas we are never in heaviness but when there is a need, nor more than, upon some account or other there is need.

1. He complains that he could not rest in his bed, ver. 13, 14. There we promise ourselves some repose, when we are fatigued with labour, pain, or travel. *My bed shall comfort me, and my couch shall ease my complaint*: Sleep will for a time give me some relief; it useth to do so; it is appointed for that end: many a time it hath eased us, and we have awaked refreshed and with new vigour. When it is so, we have great reason to be thankful: but it was not so with poor Job: his bed, instead of comforting him, terrified him; and his couch, instead of easing his complaint added to it; for, if he dropped asleep, he was disturbed with his frightful dreams; and when those awaked him, still he was haunted with dreadful apparitions. This was it that made the night so unwelcome and wearisome to him as it was, ver. 4. *When shall I rise?* Note, God can, when he pleaseth, meet us with terror there, where we promise ourselves ease and repose: nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves; and as we have often contracted guilt by the ravings of an unsanctified fancy, he can likewise, by the power of our own imagination, create us a great deal of grief, and so make that our punishment which has often been our sin. Job's dreams, though they might partly arise from his disordered, (in fevers or small pox, when the body is all over sore, it is common for the sleep to be unquiet,) yet we have reason to think Satan had a hand in them, who delights to terrify those whom it is out of his reach to destroy: but Job looked up to God, who permitted Satan to do this, (thou scarest me,) and mistook Satan's morose and bugbears for the terrors of God setting themselves in array against me. We have reason to pray to God that our dreams may neither deceive nor disquiet us, neither tempt us to sin, nor torment us with fear; that he who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, will keep us when we slumber and sleep, that the devil may not then do us mischief, either as an insinuating serpent or as a roaring lion; and to bless God if we be down, and our sleep is sweet and we are not thus scared.

2. He covets to rest in his grave, that bed where there are no tossings to and fro, nor any frightful dreams, ver. 15, 16. (1.) He was sick of life, and hated the thoughts of it: I lothe it; I have had enough of it: I would not live alway. Not only not live alway in this condition, in pain and misery, but not live alway in the most easy and prosperous condition, to be continually in danger of being thus reduced. *My days are vanity* at the best, empty of solid comfort, exposed to real griefs; and I would not be for ever tied to such uncertainty. Note, A good man would not, if he might, live always in this world; no, not though it smile upon him; because it is a world of sin and temptation, and he hath a better world in prospect. (2.) He was fond of death, and pleased himself with the thoughts of it: his soul (his judgments, he thought, but really it was his passion) chose strangling and death rather; any death rather than such a life as this. Doubtless this was Job's infirmity; for, though a good man would not wish to live alway in this world, and would choose strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will be content to live as long as pleaseth God; not choose them rather than life, because life is our opportunity of glorifying God and getting ready for heaven.

17. What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? 18. And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? 19. How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone, till I swallow down my spittle? 20. I have sinned: what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself? 21. And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust, and thou shalt seek me in the morning; but I shall not be.

Job here reasons with God,

1. Concerning his dealings with man in general, ver. 17, 18. *What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?* This may be looked upon either, (1.) As a passionate reflection upon the proceedings of divine justice; as if the great God did diminish and disparage himself in contending with man. Great men think it below them to take cognizance of those who are much their inferiors, so far as to reprove and correct their follies and indecencies: why then doth God magnify man, by visiting him, and trying him, and making so much ado about him? Why will he thus pour all his forces upon one that is such an unequal match for him? why will he visit him with afflictions, which, like a quotidian ague, return as duly and constantly as the morning-light, and try every moment what he can bear? We mistake God, and the nature of his providence, if we think it any lessening to him to take notice of the meanness of his creatures. Or, (2.) As a pious admiration of the condescensions of divine grace, like that, Psal. viii. 4.—*exliv*. 3. He owns God's favour to man in general, even then when he complains of his own particular troubles. What is man, miserable man, a poor, mean, weak, creature, that thou, the great and glorious God, shouldst deal with him as thou dost? What is man, (1.) That thou shouldst put such honour



honour upon him, shouldst magnify him, by taking him into covenant and communion with thyself? (2.) That thou shouldst concern thyself so much about him, shouldst set thy heart upon him, as dear to thee, and one thou hast a kindness for? (3.) That thou shouldst visit him with thy compassionate every morning, as we daily visit a particular friend, or as the physician visits his patients every morning to help them? (4.) That thou shouldst try him, shouldst feel his pulse and observe his motions every moment, as in care about him and jealous over him? That such a worm of the earth, as man is, should be the darling and the favourite of Heaven, is what we have reason for ever to admire.

2. Concerning his dealings with him in particular. Observe, (1.) The complaint he makes of his afflictions; which he here aggravates, and (as we are all too apt to do) makes the worst of, in three expressions, (1.) That he was the butt to God's arrows: Thou hast set me as a mark against thee, ver. 20. My case is singular, and none are shot at so as I am. (2.) That he was a burden to himself, ready to sink under the load of his own life. How much delight soever we take in ourselves, God can, when he pleaseth, make us burdens to ourselves. What comfort can we take in ourselves if God appear against us as an enemy, and we have no comfort in him? (3.) That he had no intermission of his griefs, ver. 19. How long will it be ere thou cause thy rod to depart from me, or abate the rigour of the correction, at least for so long as that I may swallow down my spittle? It should seem, Job's distemper lay much in his throat, stopped him up, and almost choked him, so that he could not swallow his spittle: he complains, chap. xxx. 18. that it bound him about like the collar of his coat. Lord, saith he, wilt thou not give me some respite, some breathing-time? chap. ix. 18.

2. The concern he is in about his sins. The best men have sin to complain of; and, the better they are, the more they will complain of it.

1. He ingenuously owns himself guilty before God: *I have sinned*. God had said of him, that he was a *perfect and an upright man*; yet he saith of himself, *I have sinned*. Those may be upright who yet are not sinless; and those who are sincerely penitent are accepted, through a mediator, as evangelically perfect. Job maintained, against his friends, that he was not a hypocrite, not a wicked man, and yet owns to his God that he had sinned. If we have been kept from gross acts of sin, it doth not therefore follow that we are innocent: The best must acknowledge, before God, that they have sinned. His calling God, the observer, or preserver, of men, may be looked upon as designed for an aggravation of his sin: Though God has had his eye upon me, his eye upon me for good, yet I have sinned against him. When we are in affliction, it is seasonable to confess sin, as the procuring-cause of our affliction. Penitent confessions would drown and silence passionate complaints.

2. He seriously enquires how he might make his peace with God. *What shall I do unto thee*, having done so much against thee? Are we convinced that we have sinned, and are we brought to own it? we cannot but conclude that something must be done to prevent the fatal consequence of it: The matter must not rest as it is; but some course must be taken to undo what has been ill done, and, if we are truly sensible of the danger we have run ourselves into, we shall be willing to do any thing; to take a pardon upon any terms; and therefore shall be inquisitive what we shall do, Mic. vi. 6, 7. what we shall do to God: not to satisfy the demands of his justice, (that is done only by the Mediator,) but to qualify ourselves for the tokens of his favour, according to the tenor of the gospel covenant. And, in making this inquiry, it is good to eye God as the preserver or favourer of men, not their destroyer. In our repentance we must keep up good thoughts of God, as one that delights not in the ruin of his creatures, but would rather they should return and live. Thou art the Saviour of men; be my Saviour; for I cast myself upon thy mercy.

3. He earnestly begs for the forgiveness of his sins, ver. 21. The heat of his spirit, as on the one hand it made his complaints the more bitter, so on the other hand it made his prayers the more lively and importunate; as here, *Why dost thou not pardon my transgressions?* Art not thou a God of infinite mercy, that art ready to forgive? Hast not thou wrought repentance in me? Why then dost thou not give me the pardon of my sin, and make me to hear the voice of that joy and gladness? Surely he means more than barely the removing of his outward trouble, and is herein earnest for the return of God's favour, which he complained of the want of, chap. vi. 4. Lord, pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I can easily bear my afflictions, Matt. ix. 2. Isa. xxxiii. 24. When the mercy of God pardons the transgression that is committed by us, the grace of God takes away the iniquity that reigns in us: Wherever God removes the guilt of sin, it breaks the power of sin.

4. To enforce his prayer for pardon, he pleads the prospect he had of dying quickly. *For now shall I sleep in the dust*. Death will lay us in the dust: will lay us to sleep there; and perhaps presently, now in a little time. Job had been complaining of restless nights, and that sleep departed from his eyes, ver. 3, 4, 13, 14. But those who cannot sleep in a bed of down will shortly sleep in a bed of dust, and not be feared with dreams, nor toils to and fro. And thou shalt seek me in the morning to shew me favour, but I shall not be; it will be too late then. If my sins be not pardoned while I live, I am lost and undone for ever. Note, The consideration of this, that we must shortly die, and perhaps may die suddenly, should make us all very solicitous to get our sins pardoned, and our iniquity taken away.

## C H A P. VIII.

Job's friends are like Job's messengers: those followed one another close with evil tidings; these with harsh censures: Both unawares served Satan's design: those, to drive him from his integrity; these, to drive him from the comfort of it. Eliphaz did not reply to what Job had said in answer to him, but left it to Bildad, whom he knew to be of the same mind with himself in this affair. Those are not the wisest of the company, but the weakest rather, who covet to have all the talk. Let others speak in their turn, and let the first keep silence, 1 Cor. xiv. 30, 31. Eliphaz had undertaken to shew, that, because Job was sorely afflicted, he was certainly a wicked man; Bildad is much of the same mind, and will conclude Job a wicked man, unless God do speedily appear for his relief. In this chapter he endeavours to convince Job, (1.) That he had spoken too passionately, ver. 2. (2.) That he and his children had suffered justly, ver. 3, 4. (3.) That, if he were a true penitent, God would soon turn his captivity, ver. 5-7. (4.) That it was a usual thing for Providence to extinguish the joys and hopes of wicked men, as his were extinguished; and therefore they had reason to suspect him for a hypocrite, ver. 8-19. (5.) That they shall be abundantly confirmed in their suspicion, unless God did speedily appear for his relief, ver. 20, 22.

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind? 3. Doth God pervert judgment? or doth

the Almighty pervert justice? 4. If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression: 5. If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty; 6. If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. 7. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase.

Here, 1. Bildad reproves Job for what he had said, ver. 2. checks his passion, but perhaps (as is too common) with greater passion. We thought Job spoke a great deal of good sense, and much to the purpose, and that he had reason and right on his side; but Bildad, like an eager angry disputant, turns it all off with this: *How long wilt thou speak these things?* taking it for granted, that Eliphaz had said enough to silence him, and that therefore all he said was impertinent. Thus (as Caryl observes) reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes. Men's meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked, as if they were evil-doers. Bildad compares Job's discourse to a *strong wind*: Job had excused himself with this, that his *speeches* were but as *wind*, chap. vi. 26. and therefore they should not make so much ado about them: yea, but (saith Bildad) they are as strong wind, blustering and threatening, boisterous and dangerous; and therefore we are concerned to fence against them.

2. He justifies God in what he had done. This he had no occasion to do at this time; for Job did not condemn God, as he would have it thought he did: and this he might have done, without reflecting upon Job's children, as he doth here. Could not he be an advocate for God, but he must be an accuser of the brethren?

(1.) He is right in general, that *God doth not pervert judgment*, nor ever go contrary to any settled rule of justice, ver. 2. Far be it from him that he should, and from us that we should suspect him. He never oppresseth the innocent, nor lays more load on the guilty than they deserve. He is God, the judge; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen. xviii. 25. If there should be unrighteousness with God, how shall he judge the world? Rom. iii. 5, 6. He is almighty, Shaddai, all-sufficient. Men pervert justice sometimes for fear of the power of others; but God is almighty, and stands in awe of none: Sometimes to obtain the favour of others; but God is all-sufficient, and cannot be benefited by the favour of any. It is man's weakness and impotency that he often is unjust; it is God's omnipotence that he cannot be so.

(2.) Yet he is not fair and candid in the application: He takes it for granted that Job's children (the death of whom was one of the greatest of his afflictions) had been guilty of some notorious wickedness; and that the unhappy circumstances of their death were sufficient evidence that they were sinners above all the children of the east, ver. 4. Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment; and yet it did not therefore follow, either that his children were cast-aways, or that they died for some great transgression. It is true that we and our children have sinned against God, and we ought to justify him in all he brings upon us and ours; but extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces; and, in our judgments of another's case, (unless the contrary appears) we ought to take the more favourable side, as our Saviour directs, Luke xiii. 2, 4. Here Bildad missed it.

3. He puts Job in hope, that, if he were indeed upright, as he said he was, he should yet see a good issue of his present troubles. *Although thy children have sinned against him, and are cast away in their transgression*, (they have died in their own sin,) yet, if thou be pure and upright thyself, and, as an evidence of that, wilt now seek unto God and submit to him, all shall be well yet, ver. 5, 6, 7. This may be taken two ways: Either,

1. As designed to prove Job a hypocrite and a wicked man, though not by the greatness, yet by the continuance, of his afflictions. When thou wast impoverished, and thy children killed, if thou hadst been pure and upright, and approved thyself so in the trial, God would before now have returned in mercy to thee, and comforted thee according to the time of thine affliction; but, because he doth not so, we have reason to conclude, thou art not so pure and upright as thou pretendest to be: If thou hadst carried thyself well under the former affliction, thou hadst not been struck with the latter. Herein Bildad was not in the right; for a good man may be afflicted for his trial, not only very sorely, but very long; and yet if for life, in comparison with eternity, it is but for a moment. But, since Bildad put it to this issue, God was pleased to join issue with him, and prove his servant Job an honest man by Bildad's own argument; for soon after he blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Or,

2. As designed to direct and encourage Job, that he might not thus run himself into despair, and give up all for gone: yet there might be hope if he would take the right course. I am apt to think Bildad here intended to condemn Job, yet would be thought to counsel and comfort him. (1.) He gives him good counsel, yet perhaps not expecting he would take it; the same that Eliphaz had given him, chap. v. 8. to seek unto God, and that betimes, i.e. speedily and seriously; and not to be dilatory and trifling in his return and repentance. He adviseth him not to complain, but to petition, and to make his supplication to the Almighty with humility and faith: And to see that there was (what he feared had hitherto been wanting) sincerity in heart; thou must be pure and upright: and honesty in his house; that must be the habitation of thy righteousness, and not filled with ill-gotten goods; else God will not hear thy prayers, Psal. lxxvi. 18. It is only the prayer of the upright that is the acceptable and prevailing prayer, Prov. xv. 8. (2.) He gives him good hopes that he should yet again see good days, yet secretly suspecting he was not qualified to see them: He assures him, that, if he would be early in seeking God, God would awake for his relief, would remember him, and return to him, though now he seemed to forget him, and forsake him. That, if his habitation were righteous, it should be prosperous; for honesty is the best policy, and inward piety a sure friend to outward prosperity: when we return to God in a way of duty, we have reason to hope that he will return to us in a way of mercy. Let not Job object that he had so little left to begin the world with again; that it was impossible he should ever prosper as he had done: no, though thy beginning should be never so small, a little meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, God's blessing shall multiply that to a great increase. This is God's way of enriching the souls of his people with graces and comforts; not *per saltum*, but *per gradum*: The beginning is small, but the progress is to perfection. Dawning light grows to noon-day; a grain of mustard-seed to a great tree. Let us not therefore despise the day of small things, but hope for the day of great things.

8. For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers 9 (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days



days upon earth *are* a shadow.) 10. Shall not they teach thee, *and* tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? 11. Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? 12. Whilst it *is* yet in his greenness, *and* not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. 13. So *are* the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish: 14. Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust *shall be* a spider's web. 15. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure. 16. He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. 17. His roots are wrapped about the heap, *and* he feeth the place of stones. 18. If he destroy him from his place, then *it* shall deny him, *saying*, I have not seen thee. 19. Behold, this *is* the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow.

Bildad here discourseth very well of the sad catastrophe of hypocrites and evil-doers, and the fatal period of all their hopes and joys. He will not be so bold as to say, with Eliphaz, that none that were righteous were ever cut off thus, *chap. iv. 7.* yet he takes it for universally granted, that God, in the course of his providence, doth ordinarily bring wicked men, who seemed pious and were prosperous, to shame and ruin in this world; and, by making their prosperity short, he discovers their piety to be counterfeit. Whether this will certainly prove, that all who are thus ruined must be concluded to have been hypocrites, he will not say, but rather suspect, and thinks the application is easy.

1. He proves this truth, of the certain destruction of all the hopes and joys of hypocrites, by an appeal to antiquity, and the concurring sentiment and observation of all wise and good men. And an undoubted truth it is if we take in the other world, that, if not in this life, yet in the life to come, hypocrites will be deprived of all their trusts and all their triumphs; whether Bildad so meant or not, we must so take it.

Let us observe the method of his proof, *ver. 8, 9, 10.*

(1.) He insists not on his own judgment and that of his companions: *We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, ver. 9.* He perceived Job had no opinion of their abilities; he thought they knew little: faith Bildad, We will own that we know nothing; are as ready to confess our ignorance as thou art to condemn it; for we are but as yesterday in comparison, and our days upon earth are short and transient, and hastening away as a shadow. And therefore, (1.) We are not so near the fountain-head of divine revelation (which then for aught appears, was conveyed by tradition) as the former age was; and therefore we must inquire what they said, and recount what we have been told of their sentiments. Blessed be God, now we have the word of God in writing, and are directed to search that: we need not inquire of the former ages, nor prepare ourselves to the search of their fathers; for though we ourselves are but of yesterday, the word of God in the scripture is as high as them, *Rom. x. 8.* And it is the more sure word of prophecy, to which we must take heed: If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them *understand more than the ancients*, *Psal. cxix. 99, 100.* (2.) We do not live so long as they of the former age did, to make observations upon the methods of divine providence, and therefore cannot be such competent judges as they in a cause of this nature. Note, The shortness of our lives is a great hindrance to the improvement of our knowledge, and so is the frailty and weakness of our bodies. *Vita brevis, ars longa.*

(2.) He refers himself to the testimony of the ancients, and to the knowledge which Job himself had of their sentiments. Do thou *enquire of the former age*, and let them tell thee not only their own judgment in this matter, but also of their fathers, *ver. 8. They will teach thee*, and inform thee, (*ver. 10.*) that all along, in their time, the judgments of God followed wicked men; this they will utter of their hearts, *i. e.* as that which they firmly believe themselves, which they are greatly affected with, and desirous to acquaint and affect others with. Note, (1.) For the right understanding of divine providence, and the unfolding of the difficulties of it, it will be of use to compare the observations and experiences of former ages with the events of our own day; and, in order thereto, to consult history, especially the sacred history, which is the most ancient, infallibly true, and written designedly for our learning. (2.) They, that would fetch knowledge from the former ages, must search diligently, prepare for and search, and take pains in the search. (3.) Those words are most likely to reach the hearts of the learners, that come from the hearts of the teachers. They shall teach thee best that utter words out of the heart, that speak by experience, and not by rote, of spiritual and divine things.

The learned bishop Patrick suggests, that Bildad being a Shuhite, descended from Shuah one of Abraham's sons by Keturah, *Gen. xxv. 2.* in this appeal he makes to history, has a particular respect to the rewards which then remained of God's blessings upon the posterity of faithful Abraham, who hitherto, and long after, continued in his religion; and, of the extirpation of those eastern people, (neighbours to Job,) in whose country they were settled, for their wickedness: Whence he infers, that it is God's usual way to prosper the just, and root out the wicked, though for a while they may flourish.

2. He illustrates this truth by some similitudes.

1. The hopes and joys of the hypocrites are here compared to a rush or flag, *ver. 11, 12, 13.* (1.) It grows up out of the mire and water. The hypocrite cannot gain his hope without some false rotten ground or other, out of which to raise it, and with which to support it and keep it alive, any more than the rush can grow without mire: He grounds it on his worldly prosperity, the plausible profession he makes of religion, the good opinion of his neighbours, and his own good conceit of himself, which are no solid foundation on which to build his confidence. It is all but mire and water, and the hope that grows out of it is but rush and flag. (2.) It may look green and gay for a while; the rush outgrows the grass, but it is light and hollow, and empty and good for nothing. It is green for show, but of no use. (3.) It withers presently, *before any other herb, ver. 12.* Even while it is in its greenness, it is dried away and gone in a little time. Note, The best state of hypocrites and evil-doers borders upon withering; even when it is green in its going. The grass is *cut down and withered, Psal. xc. 6.* But the rush is not cut down, and yet *withers, withers before it grows up, Psal. cxxxix. 6.* as it has no use, so it has no continuance. And *ver. 13. so are the paths of all that forget God*, they take the same way that the rush doth, *for the hypocrite's hope shall perish.* Note, 1. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of mens hypocrisy, and of the vain hopes with which they flatter and deceive themselves in their hypocrisy. Men would not be hypocrites, if they did not forget that the God with whom they have to do searcheth the heart, and requires truth there; that he is a spirit, and has his eye on our spirits: And, hypocrites could have no hope, if they

did not forget that God is righteous, and will not be mocked with the torn and the lame. 2. The hope of hypocrites is a great cheat upon themselves, and though it may flourish a while, it will certainly perish at last, and they with it.

2. They are here compared to a spider's web, or a spider's house, as it is in the margin; a cob-web, *ver. 14, 15.* The hope of the hypocrite: (1.) It is woven out of his own bowels, it is the creature of his own fancy, and ariseth purely from a conceit of his own merit and sufficiency. There is a great deal of difference between the work of the bee and that of the spider: a diligent christian, like the laborious bee, fetcheth in all his comfort from the heavenly dews of God's word; but the hypocrite, like the subtle spider, weaves it out of a false hypothesis of his own, concerning God, as if he were altogether such a one as himself. (2.) He is very fond of it, as the spider of her web, pleaseth himself with it, wraps himself in it, calls it his house, *leans upon it, and holds it fast*: it is said of the spider that *she takes hold with her hands, and in the kings palaces, Prov. xxx. 28.* So doth a carnal worldling hug himself in the fulness and firmness of his outward prosperity, prides himself in that house as his palace, and fortifies himself in it as his castle, and makes use of it, as the spider of her web, to ensnare those he has a mind to prey upon: So doth a formal professor, he flatters himself in his own eyes, doubts not of his salvation; is secure of heaven, and cheats the world with his vain confidence. (3.) It will easily and certainly be swept away as the cob-web with the Locom, when God shall come to purge his house. The prosperity of worldly people will fail them, when they expect to find safety and happiness in it: They seek to hold fast their estates, but God is plucking them out of their hands; and whose shall all those things be which they have provided? or what the better will they be for them? the confidence of hypocrites will fail them; *I tell you, I know you not*; The house built on the sand will fall in the storm, when the builder most needed it and promised himself the benefit of it. *When a wicked man dies, his expectation perisheth.* The ground of his hopes will prove false; he will be disappointed of the thing he hoped for, and his foolish hope, with which he buoyed himself up, will be turned into endless despair; and thus his hope will be cut off, his web, that refuge of lies swept away, and he crushed in it.

3. They are here compared to a flourishing and well-rooted tree, which, though it do not wither of itself, yet will easily be cut down, and its place know it no more. The secure and prosperous sinner may think himself wronged when he is compared to a rush and a flag, he thinks he has a better bottom than so, and he will allow him his conceit (faith Bildad) and give him all the advantages he can desire, and yet bring him in suddenly cut off. He is here represented, as Nebuchadnezzar was in his own dream, (*Dan. iv. 10.*) by a great tree.

1. See this tree fair and flourishing, *ver. 16.* like a *green-bay tree, Psal. xxvii. 35.* green before the sun, that keeps its greenness in defiance of the scorching sun-beams, and his branch shooting forth under the protection of his garden-wall, and with the benefit of his garden soil; see it fixed, and taking deep root, never likely to be overthrown by stormy winds, for his roots are interwoven with the stones, *ver. 17.* it grows in firm ground, not, as the rush, in mire and water. Thus doth a wicked man, when he prospers in the world, think himself secure; his wealth is a high wall in his own conceit.

2. See this tree felled and forgotten notwithstanding; *destroyed from his place, ver. 18.* and so wholly extirpated, that there shall remain no sign or token where it grew; the very place shall say, *I have not seen thee*, and the standers-by shall say the same; *I sought him, but he could not be found, Psal. xxvii. 36.* He made a great show and a great noise for a time, but he is gone on a sudden, and *neither root nor branch left him, Mal. iv. 1.* This is the joy (*i. e.* this is the end and conclusion) of the wicked man's ways, *ver. 19.* this is that which all his joy comes to; *the way of the ungodly shall perish, Psal. i. 6.* His hope he thought would in the issue be turned into joy, but this is the issue, this is the joy, *the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow, Isa. xlvii. 11.* This is the best of it; and what then is the worst of it? But he shall not leave a family behind him to enjoy what he has? No, *out of the earth, not out of his roots, shall others grow*, that are nothing akin to him, and shall fill up his place, and rule over that for which he laboured. Others, *viz.* of the same spirit and disposition, shall grow up in his place, and be as secure as ever he was, not warned by his fall: The way of worldlings is their folly, and yet there is a race of them that approve their sayings, *Psal. xlix. 13.*

20. Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man; neither will he help the evil doers: 21. Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. 22. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame, and the dwelling-place of the wicked shall come to nought.

Bildad here, in the close of his discourse, sums up what he has to say in a few words, setting before Job life and death, the blessing and the curse; assuring him, that, as he was, so he should fare, and, therefore, they might conclude, that, as he fared, so he was.

1. On the one hand, if he were a perfect upright man, God would not cast him away, *ver. 20.* Though now he seemed forsaken of God, he would yet return to him, and by degrees would *turn his mourning into dancing, Psal. xxx. 11.* and comforts shall flow in upon him so plentifully, that his mouth shall be *filled with laughing, ver. 21.* So affecting should the happy change be, *Psal. cxxvi. 2.* They that loved him would rejoice with him, but they that hated him, and had triumphed in his fall, would be ashamed of their insolence, when they see him restored to his former prosperity. Now it is true, that *God will not cast away an upright man*; he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away for ever; it is true, that, if not in this world; yet in another, the mouth of the righteous shall be *filled with rejoicing*: Though their sun shall set under a cloud, yet it shall rise again clear, never more to be clouded; though they go mourning to the grave, that shall not hinder their entrance into the joy of their Lord. It is true, that the enemies of the saints will be clothed with shame when they see them crowned with honour: but it doth not therefore follow, that, if Job were not perfectly restored to his former prosperity, he forfeited the character of a perfect man.

2. On the other hand, if he were a wicked man, and an evil doer, God would not help him, but leave him to perish in his present distresses, *ver. 20.* And his dwelling-place shall come to nought, *ver. 22.* And here also it is true, that *God will not help the evil-doers*; they grow themselves out of his protection, and forfeit his favours, he will *not take the ungodly by the hand*, so it is in the margin, will not have fellowship and communion with them; *for what communion between light and darkness?* he will not lend them his hand to pull them out of the miseries, the eternal miseries, into which they have plunged themselves: they will then stretch out their hand to him for help, but it is too late, he will not *take them by the hand*: be-



between us and you there is a great gulph fixed. It is true that the dwelling-place of the wicked, sooner or later, will come to nought. Those only, that make God their dwelling-place, are safe for ever, *Psal. xc. 1.—xc. 1.* They who make other things their refuge will be disappointed. Sin brings ruin on persons and families: Yet to argue, (as Bildad, I doubt, slyly doth,) that because Job's family was sunk, and he himself at present seemed helpless, therefore he certainly was an ungodly wicked man, was neither just nor charitable, as long as there appeared no other evidence of his wickedness and ungodliness. Let us judge nothing before the time, but wait till the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; and the present difficulties of providence be solved to universal and everlasting satisfaction, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

## C H A P. IX.

In this and the following chapter, we have Job's answer to Bildad's discourse, wherein he speaks honourably of God, humbly of himself, and feelingly of his troubles; but not one word by way of reflection upon his friends, or their unkindness to him, nor in direct reply to what Bildad had said. He wisely keeps to the merits of the cause, and makes no remarks upon the person that managed it, nor seeks occasion against him. In this chapter we have, (1.) The doctrine of God's justice laid down, ver. 2. (2.) The proof of it, from his wisdom, and power, and sovereign dominion, ver. 3—13. (3.) The application of it, in which, (1.) He condemns himself, as not able to contend with God, neither in law nor battle, ver. 14—21. (2.) He maintains his point, that we cannot judge of men's character by their outward condition, ver. 22—24. (3.) He complains of the greatness of his troubles, the confusion he was in, and the loss he was at what to say or do, ver. 25—35.

1. **THEN** Job answered and said, 2. I know it is so of a truth: but how shall man be just with God? 3. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. 4. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? 5. Which removeth the mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in his anger. 6. Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. 7. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not: and sealeth up the stars. 8. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. 9. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. 10. Which doth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number. 11. Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not. 12. Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What dost thou? 13. If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.

Bildad began with a rebuke to Job for talking so much, *chap. viii. 2.* Job makes no answer to that, though it had been easy enough to retort it upon himself: but, what he next lays down as his principle, that God never perverts judgment, Job agrees with him in; *I know it so of a truth*, ver. 2. Note, Those we dispute with, we should be ready to own how far we agree with, and not slight, much less resist, a truth, though produced by an adversary, and urged against us, but receive it in the light and love of it, though it have been misapplied. *It is so of a truth*, that wickedness brings men to ruin, and the godly are taken under God's special protection: These are truths which I subscribe to; but, how can any man make good his part with God? *In his sight shall no flesh living be justified*, *Psal. cxliii. 2.* How should man be just with God? Some understand this as a passionate complaint of God's strictness and severity, that he is a God there is no dealing with; and it cannot be denied, that there are in this chapter some peevish expressions, which seem to speak such language as that. But I take this rather as a pious confession of man's sinfulness, and his own in particular, that, if God should deal with any of us according to the desert of our iniquities, we were certainly undone.

1. He lays this down for a truth; that man is an unequal match for his Maker, either in dispute or combat.

(1.) In dispute, ver. 3. *If he will contend with him, either at law or at an argument, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.* (1.) God can ask a thousand puzzling questions, which those that quarrel with him, and arraign his proceedings, cannot give an answer to. When God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, he asked him a great many questions; *Dost thou know this? and canst thou do that?* to none of which could Job give an answer, *chap. xxxviii. and xxxix.* God can easily manifest the folly of the greatest pretenders to wisdom. (2.) God can lay to our charge a thousand offences, can draw up against us a thousand articles of impeachment, and we cannot answer him so as to acquit ourselves from the imputation of any of them, but must by silence give consent that they are all true: we cannot set aside one as foreign, another as frivolous, and another as false; we cannot, as to one, deny the fact, and plead not guilty, and, as to another, deny the fault, confess, and justify; no, we are not able to answer him, but must lay our hand upon our mouth, as Job did, *chap. xl. 4, 5*, and cry, *guilty, guilty.*

(2.) In combat, ver. 4. *Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?* The answer is very easy; you cannot produce any instance, from the beginning of the world to this day, of any daring sinner that has hardened himself against God, hath obstinately persisted in rebellion against him, but he found God too hard for him, and paid dear for his folly. They have not prospered or had peace; they have had no comfort in it nor success. What did ever any man get by trials of skill, or trials of titles, with his Maker? Al! the opposition given to God, is but setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire, so foolish, so fruitless, so destructive, is the attempt, *Isa. xxvii. 4. Ezek. xxvii. 14. 1 Cor. x. 22.* Apostate angels hardened themselves against God, but did not prosper, *2 Pet. ii. 4.* The dragon fights, but is cast out, *Rev. xii. 8.* Wicked men harden themselves against God, dispute his wisdom, disobey his laws, are impenitent for their sins, and incorrigible under their afflictions; they reject the offers of his grace, and resist the stirrings of his Spirit; they make nothing of his threatenings, and make head against his interest in the world; but

have they prospered? Can they prosper? No, they are but *treasuring up against themselves wrath against the day of wrath.* They that roll this stone, it will return upon them.

2. He proves it, by shewing what a God he is with whom we have to do: *He is wise in heart*, and therefore we cannot answer him at law; he is *mighty in strength*, and therefore we cannot fight it out with him. It is the greatest madness that can be, to think to contend with a God of infinite wisdom and power, who knows every thing, and can do every thing; who can be neither outwitted nor overpowered. The devil promised himself, that Job, in the day of his affliction, would curse God, and speak ill of him; but, instead of that, he sets himself to honour God, and to speak highly of him. As ill pained as he is, and as much taken up with his own miseries, when he has occasion to mention the wisdom and power of God, he forgets his complaints, dwells with delight, and expatiates with a flood of eloquence upon that noble useful subject.

Evidences of the wisdom and power of God he fetcheth,

1. From the kingdom of nature, in which the God of nature acts with an uncontrollable power, and doth what he pleaseth, for all the orders and all the powers of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him.

(1.) When he pleaseth he alters the course of nature and turns back its streams, ver. 5, 6, 7. By the common law of nature the mountains are settled, and are therefore called everlasting mountains, the earth is established, and cannot be removed, *Psal. cxiii. 1.* and the pillars thereof are immovably fixed; the sun riseth in its season, and the stars shed their influence in this lower world; but, when God pleaseth, he cannot only drive out of the common track, but invert the order, and change the law of nature. (1.) Nothing more firm than the mountains; when we speak of removing mountains, we mean that which is impossible; yet the divine power can make them change their seat, he removeth them and they know not, removes them, whether they will or not; he can make them lower their heads, level them, and overturn them in his anger: can spread the mountains as easily as the husbandman spreads the mole-hills, be they never so high, and large, and rocky: Men have much ado to pass them over, but God, when he pleaseth, can pass them off. He made Sinai shake, *Psal. lxxviii. 8.* The hills skipped, *Psal. cxiv. 4.* The everlasting mountains were scattered, *Hab. iii. 6.* (2.) Nothing more fixed than the earth on its axle-tree; yet God can, when he pleaseth, shake that out of its place, and heave it off its centre, and make even its pillars to tremble; what seemed to support it will itself need support when God gives it a shock. See how much we are indebted to God's patience; God has power enough to shake the earth from under that guilty race of mankind, which makes it groan under the burden of sin, and so to shake the wicked out of it, *Job. xxxviii. 13.* yet he continues the earth, and man upon it, and makes it not still, as once, to swallow up the rebels. (3.) Nothing more constant than the rising sun, it never misseeth its appointed time, yet God when he pleaseth can suspend it: He, that at first commanded it to rise, can countermand it: Once the sun was bid to stand, and another time to retreat, to shew that it is still under the check of its great Creator. Thus great is God's power, and how great then is his goodness, which causeth his sun to shine even upon the evil and unthankful, though he could withhold it! He that made the stars also, can, if he pleaseth, seal them up, and hide them from our eyes. By earthquakes and subterraneous fires, mountains have sometimes been removed, and the earth shaken: in very dark and cloudy days and nights, it seems to us as if the sun were forbidden to rise, and the stars were sealed up, *Acts xxvii. 20.* It is sufficient to say, that Job here speaks of what God can do: but, if we must understand it of what he has done in fact, all these verses may perhaps be applied to Noah's flood, when the earth, even its mountains, were shaken, and the sun and stars were darkened: and the world, that now is, we believe to be reserved for that fire, which will consume the mountains, and melt the earth, with its fervent heat, and which will turn the sun into darkness.

(2.) As long as he pleaseth he preserves the settled course and order of nature; and this is a continued creation. He himself alone, by his own power, and without the assistance of any other, (1.) *Spreads out the heavens*, ver. 8. not only did spread them out at first, but still spreads them out, i. e. keeps them spread out, for, otherwise, they would of themselves roll together like a scroll of parchment. (2.) *He treads upon the waves of the sea*, i. e. he suppresseth them and keepeth them under that they return not to deluge the earth, *Psal. civ. 9.* which is given as a reason why we should all fear God and stand in awe of him, *Jer. v. 22.* He is mightier than the proud waves, *Psal. xciii. 4.—lvi. 7.* (3.) He makes the constellations; three are named for all the rest, ver. 9. Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and in general the chambers of the south: the stars of which these are composed he made at first, and put into that order and he still makes them, preserves them in being, and guides their motions; he makes them to be what they are to man, and inclines the hearts of men to observe them, which the beasts are not capable of doing. Not only those stars which we see and give names to, but those also in the other hemisphere, about the antarctic pole, which never come in our sight, called here the chambers of the south, are under the divine direction and dominion. How wise is he then, and how mighty!

2. Evidences are here fetched from the kingdom of providence, that special providence, which is conversant about the affairs of the children of men. Consider what God doth in the government of the world, and you will say, he is *wise in heart* and *mighty in strength*.

1. He doth many things and great, many and great to admiration, ver. 10. Job here saith the same that Eliphaz had said, *chap. v. 9.* and, in the original, in the very same words, not declining to speak after him, though now his antagonist. God is a great God, and doth great things, a wonder-working God; his works of wonder are so many that we cannot number them, and so mysterious that we cannot find them out. O the depth of his counsels!

2. He acts invisibly and undiscerned, ver. 11. He goes by me in his operations, and I see him not, I perceive it not; his way is in the sea, *Psal. lxxvii. 19.* The operations of second causes are commonly obvious to sense, but God doth all about us, and yet we see him not, *Acts xvii. 23.* Our finite understandings cannot fathom his counsels, apprehend his motions, or comprehend the measures he takes; we are therefore incompetent judges of God's proceedings, because we know not what he doth, or what he drives at. The *arcana imperii* are things above us, which therefore we must not pretend to expound, or comment upon.

3. He acts with an incontestible sovereignty, ver. 12. He takes away our creature-comforts and confidences; when, and as he pleaseth, takes away health, estate, relations, friends, takes away life itself; whatever goes it is he that takes it; by what hand soever it is removed, his hand must be acknowledged in it; the Lord taketh away, and who can hinder him? who can turn him away? Murg. *Who shall make him restore?* So some. Who can dissuade him, or alter his counsels? Who can resist him, or oppose his operations? Who can controul him, or call him to an account for it? What action can be brought against him? or who will say



unto him, *What dost thou?* or why dost thou so? *Dan. iv. 35.* God is not obliged to give us a reason of what he doth. The meaning of his proceedings we know not now; it will be time enough to know hereafter, when it will appear that what seemed now to be done by prerogative, was done in infinite wisdom, and for the best.

4. He acts with irresistible power, which no creature can resist, *ver. 13.* *If God will not withdraw his anger,* (which he can do when he pleaseth, for he is lord of his anger, lets it out or calls it in as he will,) *the proud helpers do stoop under him,* i. e. he certainly breaks and crushes those that proudly help one another against him; proud men set themselves against God and his proceedings: in this opposition they join hand in hand. *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,* to throw off his yoke, to run down his truths, and to persecute his people: *Men of Israel, help,* Acts xxi. 28. *Psal. lxxxiii. 8.* If one enemy of God's kingdom fall under his judgment, the rest come proudly to help that, and think to deliver that out of his hand: but in vain, unless he pleaseth to withdraw his anger, which he often doth, for it is the day of his patience, the proud helpers stood under him, and fall with those whom they designed to help. *Who knows the power of God's anger?* They, who think they have strength enough to help others, will not be able to help themselves, against it.

14. How much less shall I answer him, and choose out my words to reason with him? 15. Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge. 16. If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would not I believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. 17. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause. 18. He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness. 19. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong; and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead? 20. If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. 21. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.

What Job had said of man's utter inability to contend with God he here applies to himself, and in effect despairs of gaining his favour; which (some think) ariseth from the hard thoughts he had of God, as one that having set himself against him, right or wrong, would be too hard for him. I rather think it ariseth from the sense he had of the imperfection of his own righteousness, and the dark and cloudy apprehensions which at present he had of God's displeasure against him.

1. He dares not dispute with God, *ver. 14.* *If the proud helpers do stoop under him, how much less shall I,* a poor weak creature, so far from being a helper, that I am very helpless, *how shall I answer him?* What can I say against that which God doth? If I go about to reason with him, he will certainly be too hard for me. If the potter make the clay into a vessel of dishonour, or break in pieces the vessel he has made, shall the clay or the broken vessel reason with him! So absurd is the man that replieth against God, or thinks to talk it out with him. No; let all flesh be silent before him.

2. He dares not insist upon his own justification before God. Though he vindicated his own integrity to his friends, and would not yield that he was a hypocrite and a wicked man, as they suggested, yet he would never plead it as his righteousness before God. I will never venture upon the covenant of innocency, nor think to come off by virtue of that.

Job knew so much of God, and knew so much of himself, that he durst not insist upon his own justification before God.

1. He knew so much of God that he durst not stand a trial with him, *ver. 15—19.* He knew how to make his part good with his friends, and thought himself able to deal with them, but, though his cause were better than it was, he knew it was to no purpose to debate it with God.

(1.) God knew him better than he knew himself, and therefore, *ver. 15.* though I were righteous in my own apprehension, and my own heart did not condemn me, yet God is greater than my heart, and knows those secret faults and errors of mine which I do not and cannot understand, and is able to charge me with them, and therefore I will not answer. St. Paul speaks to the same purpose, *I know nothing by myself,* am not conscious to myself of any reigning wickedness, and yet *I am not hereby justified,* 1 Cor. iv. 4. I dare not put myself upon that issue, lest God charge that upon me which I did not discover in myself. Job will therefore waive that plea, and make supplication to his Judge, i. e. would cast himself upon God's mercy, and not think to come off by his own merit.

(2.) He had no reason to think that there was any thing in his prayers to recommend them to the divine acceptance, or to fetch in an answer of peace; no worth or worthiness at all to which to ascribe their success; but it must be attributed purely to the grace and compassion of God who answers before we call, and not because we call, and gives gracious answers to our prayers, but not for our prayers, *ver. 16.* *If I had called and he had answered,* had given the thing I called to him for, yet so weak and defective are my best prayers, that I would not believe he had therein hearkened to my voice; I could not say he had saved with his right hand, and answered me, *Psal. ix. 5.* but that he did it purely for his own name's sake. Bishop Patrick expounds it thus: If I had made supplication, and he had granted my desire, I would not think my prayer had done the business. Not for your sakes, be it known to you.

(3.) His present miseries which God had brought him into, notwithstanding his integrity, gave him too sensible a conviction, that, in the ordering and disposing of men's outward condition in this world, God acts by sovereignty; and, though he never doth wrong to any, yet he doth not ever give full light to all; that is, the best do not always fare best, nor the worst fare worst in this life, because he reserves the full and exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state. Job was not conscious to himself of any extraordinary guilt, and yet fell under extraordinary afflictions, *ver. 17, 18.* Every man must expect the wind to blow upon him and ruffle him, but Job was broken with tempest; every man in the midst of these thorns and briers, must expect to be scratched, but Job was wounded, and his wounds multiplied. Every man must expect a cross daily, and to taste sometimes of the bitter cup, but poor Job's troubles came so thick upon him, that he had no breathing-time, and he was filled with bitterness; and he presumes to say all this was without cause, without any great provocation given. We have made the best of what Job said hitherto, though contrary to the judgment of many good interpreters, but here, no doubt, he spake unadvisedly with his lips: he reflected on God's goodness in saying he was not suffered to take his breath, while yet he had such good use of his reason and speech as to be able to talk thus; and on his justice,

in saying it was without cause: and yet it is true, that as, on the one hand, there are many who are chargeable with more sins than the common infirmities of the human nature, and yet feel no more sorrow than that of the common calamities of human life; so, on the other hand, there are many who feel more than the common calamities of human life, and yet are conscious to themselves of no more but the common infirmities of human nature.

(4.) He was in no capacity at all to make his part good with God, *ver. 19.* (1.) Not by force of arms: I dare not enter the lists with the Almighty; for, if I speak of strength, and think to come off by that, *lo, he is stronger*; stronger than I, and will certainly overpower me. There is no disputing (said one once to Cæsar) with him that commands legions; much less with him that has legions of angels at command. Can thy heart endure thy courage and presence of mind, or can thine hands be strong to defend thyself, in the days that I shall deal with thee? *Ezek. xxii. 14.* (2.) Not by force of arguments: I dare not try the merits of the cause: If I speak of judgment, and insist upon my right, *who will set me a time to plead?* There is no higher power to which I may appeal, no superior court to appoint a hearing of the cause, for he is supreme, and from him every man's judgment proceeds, which he must abide by.

2. He knew so much of himself that he durst not stand a trial, *ver. 20, 21.* If I go about to justify myself and to plead a righteousness of my own, my defence will be my offence, and mine own mouth shall condemn me, even when it goes about to acquit me. A good man that knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and is jealous over it with a godly jealousy, and hath often discovered that amiss there which had long lain undiscovered, is suspicious of more evil in himself than he is really conscious of, and therefore will by no means think of justifying himself before God. If we say we have no sin, we not only deceive ourselves, but we affront God, for we sin in saying so, and give the lie to the scripture, which has concluded all under sin. If I say, I am perfect, I am sinful, God has nothing to lay to my charge,—my very saying so shall prove me perverse, proud, ignorant, and presumptuous. Nay, though I were perfect, though God should pronounce me just, yet would I not know my soul, I would not be in care about the prolonging of my life, while it is loaded with all these miseries. Or, though I were free from gross sin, though my conscience do not charge me with any enormous crime, yet would I not believe my own heart so far as to insist upon my innocency, nor think my life worth striving for with God. In short, it is folly to contend with God, and our wisdom as well as duty to submit to him, and throw our lives at his feet.

22. This is one thing therefore I said it, he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. 23. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent. 24. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if not, where and who is he?

Here Job toucheth briefly upon the main point now in dispute between him and his friends. They maintained, that those who are righteous and good always prosper in this world, and none but the wicked are in misery and distress; he asserted, on the contrary, that it is a common thing for the wicked to prosper, and the righteous to be greatly afflicted: this is the one thing, the chief thing, wherein he and his friends differed, and they had not proved their assertion, therefore he abides by his: I said it, and say it again, that all things come alike to all.

Now it must be owned,

1. That there is very much truth in what Job here means; that temporal judgments, when they are sent abroad, fall both upon good and bad, and the destroying angel seldom distinguisheth (though once he did) between the houses of Israelites and the houses of Egyptians.

In the judgment of Sodom, indeed, which is called the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. far be it from God to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked, Gen. xviii. 25. but in judgments, merely temporal, the righteous have their share, and sometimes the greatest share. The sword devours one as well as another, Josiah as well as Ahab. Thus God destroys the perfect and the wicked, involves them both in the same common ruin; good and bad were sent together into Babylon, *Jer. xxiv. 5—9.* If the scourge slay suddenly, and sweep down all before it, God will be well pleased to see how the same scourge, which is the perdition of the wicked, is the trial of the innocent, and of their faith, which will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7. *Psal. lxxvi. 10.*

Against the just th' Almighty's arrows fly,  
For he delights the innocent to try;  
To shew their constant and their God-like mind,  
Not by afflictions broken, but refin'd.

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

Let this reconcile God's children to their troubles: they are but trials, designed for their honour and benefit, and, if God be pleased with them, let not them be displeased: if he laugh at the trial of the innocent, knowing how glorious the issue of it will be, at destruction and famine let them also laugh, *Job v. 22.* and triumph over them, saying, *O death where is thy sting!*

On the other hand, the wicked are so far from being made the marks of God's judgments, that the earth is given into their hand, *ver. 24.* They enjoy large possessions and great power, have what they will and do what they will. Into the hand of the wicked one: in the original, it is singular, the devil, that wicked one, is called the god of this world, and boasts, that into his hands it is delivered, *Luke iv. 6.* Or, Into the hands of a wicked man, meaning (as bishop Patrick and the Assembly's Annotations conjecture) some noted tyrant then living in those parts, whose great wickedness and great prosperity were well known both to Job and his friends. The wicked have the earth given them, but the righteous have heaven given to them; and which is better, heaven without earth, or earth without heaven? God in his providence advanceth wicked men, while he covers the faces of those who are fit to be judges, who are wise and good, and qualified for government, and buries them alive in obscurity; perhaps suffers them to be run down and condemned, and to have their faces covered as criminals, by those wicked ones into whose hand the earth is given. We daily see this is done; if it be not God that doth it, where and who is he that doth? To whom can it be ascribed, but to him that rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he will? *Dan. iv. 32.*

2. Yet it must be owned, that there is too much passion in what Job here saith. The manner of expression is peevish: when he meant that God afflicts, he ought not to have said he destroys, both the perfect and the wicked: when he meant, that God pleaseth himself with the trial of the innocent, he ought to have said he laughs at it, for he doth not afflict willingly



lingly. When the spirit is heated, either with dispute or with discontent, we have need to set a watch before the door of our lips, that we may observe a good decorum in speaking of divine things.

25. Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good. 26. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey. 27. If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness and comfort myself: 28. I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent. 29. If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? 30. If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; 31. Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. 32. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment: 33. Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. 34. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me. 35. Then would I speak, and not fear him; but it is not so with me.

Job here grows more and more querulous, and doth not conclude this chapter with such awful expressions of God's wisdom and justice as he began it. They that indulge a complaining humour, know not to what indecencies, nay, to what impieties, it will hurry them. The beginning of that strife with God is, as the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off, before it be meddled with. When we are in trouble, we are allowed to complain to God, as the Psalmist often, but must by no means complain of God as Job here.

1. His complaint here, of the passing away of the days of his prosperity, is well enough, ver. 25, 26. My days, i. e. all my good days are gone, never to return; gone on a sudden, gone ere I was aware; never did any courier that went express, like Cushiti and Ahimaaz, with good tidings, make such haste as all my comforts did from me; never did ship fail to its port, never did eagle fly upon his prey, with such incredible swiftness! nor doth there remain any footstep of my prosperity, any more than there doth of an eagle in the air or a ship in the sea, Prov. xxx. 19. See here, (1.) How swift the motion of time is; it is always upon the wing, hastening to its period; it says for no man. What little need have we of pastimes, and what great need to redeem time, when time runs on so fast towards eternity, which comes as time goes? (2.) How vain the enjoyments of time are, which we may be quite deprived of while yet time continues? Our day may be longer than the sun-shine of our prosperity; and, when that is gone, it is as if it had not been. The remembrance of having done our duty will be pleasing afterwards, so will not the remembrance of our having got a great deal of worldly wealth, when it is all lost and gone. They flee away past recall, they see no good, and leave none behind them.

2. His complaint of his present uneasiness is excusable, ver. 27, 28. (1.) It should seem, he did his endeavour to quiet and compose himself as his friends advised him. That was the good he would do; he would fain forget his complaints and praise God, would leave off his heaviness and comfort himself, that he might be fit for converse both with God and man; but, (2.) He found he could not do it; I am afraid of all my sorrows; then, when I strive most against my trouble, it prevails most over me, and proves too hard for me! It is easier in such a case to know what we should do than to do it; to know what temper we should be in than to get into that temper, and keep in it. It is easy to preach patience to those that are in trouble, and to tell them they must forget their complaints, and comfort themselves, but it is not so soon done as said. Fear and sorrow are tyrannizing things, not easily brought into the subjection they ought to be kept in to religion and right reason.

3. But his complaint of God, as implacable and inexorable, was by no means to be excused. It was the language of his corruption. He knew better things, and at another time would have been far from harbouring any such hard thoughts of God as now broke in upon his spirit and broke out in these passionate complaints. Good men do not always speak like themselves; but God considers their frame, and the strength of their temptations, give them leave afterwards to unsay it by repentance, and will not lay it to their charge.

Job seems to speak here,

1. As if he despaired of obtaining from God any relief or redress of his grievances, though he should produce never so good proofs of his integrity. I know thou wilt not hold me innocent, my afflictions have continued so long upon me, and increased so fast, that I do not expect thou wilt ever clear up my innocency by delivering me out of them and restoring me to a prosperous condition. Right or wrong I must be treated as a wicked man, my friends will continue to think so of me, and God will continue upon me the afflictions which gave them occasion to think so, and why then do I labour in vain to clear myself, and maintain my own integrity? ver. 29. It is to no purpose to speak in a cause that is already prejudged. With men, it is often labour in vain for the most innocent to go about to clear themselves; they must be adjudged guilty, though the evidence be never so plain for them: but it is not so in our dealings with God, who is the patron of oppressed innocency, and to whom it was never in vain to commit a righteous cause.

Nay, he not only despaired of relief, but expects that his endeavour to cheat himself would render him yet more obnoxious, ver. 30, 31. If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my integrity never so evident, it will be all to no purpose, judgment must go against me, thou shalt plunge me in the ditch, the pit of destruction; so some; or rather the filthy kennel, or sewer, which will make me stink so in the nostrils of all about me, that my own clothes shall abhor me, and I shall even loathe to touch myself. He saw his afflictions coming from God, those were the things that blackened him in the eye of his friends, and upon that score he complained of them, and of the continuance of them, not only as the ruin of his comfort, as the ruin of his reputation. Yet these words are capable of a good construction. If we be never so industrious to justify ourselves before men, and to preserve our credit with them; if we keep our hands never so clean from the pollutions of gross sin, which fall under the eye of the world; yet God, who knows our hearts, can charge us with so much secret sin as will for ever take off all our pretensions to purity and innocency, and make us see ourselves odious in the sight of the holy God. Paul, while a Pharisee, made his hands very clean, but, when the commandment came and discovered to him his heart-sins, made him know lust, that plunged him in the ditch.

2. As if he despaired to have so much as a fair hearing with God; and that they were hard indeed,

1. He complains that he was not upon even terms with God, ver. 32. He is not a man, as I am. I could venture to dispute with a man like myself; the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, but he is infinitely above me, and therefore I dare not enter the lists with him. I shall certainly be cast if I contend with him. Note, (1.) God is not a man as we are. Of the greatest princes we may say, they are men as we are, but not of the great God. His thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and we must not measure him by ourselves. Man is foolish and weak, frail and fickle, but God is neither so nor so. We are depending, dying creatures; he the independent and immortal Creator. (2.) The consideration of this should keep us very low and very silent before God. Let us not make ourselves equal with God, but always eye him as equally above us.

2. That there was no arbitrator, or umpire, to adjust the differences between him and God, and to determine the controversy, ver. 33. Neither is there any days-man. This complaint, that there was not, is, in effect, a wish that there were, and so the LXX read it. O that there were a mediator between us! Job would gladly refer the matter, but no creature was capable of being a referee, and therefore he must even refer it still to God himself, and resolve to acquiesce in his judgment. Our Lord Jesus is the blessed days-man, who had mediated between heaven and earth, has laid his hand upon us both; to him the Father has committed all judgment, and we must; but this matter was not then brought to so clear a light as it is now by the gospel, which leaves no room for such a complaint as this.

3. That the terrors of God, which set themselves in array against him, put him into such confusion, that he knew not how to address himself to God with the confidence with which he was formerly wont to approach him, ver. 34, 35. Besides the distance which I am kept at by his infinite transcendence, his present dealings with me are very discouraging. Let him take his rod away from me; he means not so much his outward afflictions as the load which lay upon his spirit from the apprehensions of God's wrath; that was his fear which terrified him: let that be removed, let me recover the sight of his mercy, and not be amazed with the sight of nothing but his terrors, and then I would speak, and order my cause before him. But it is not so with me, the cloud doth not at all scatter, the wrath of God still fastens upon me, and preys on my spirits as much as ever; and what to do I know not.

From all this let us take occasion, (1.) To stand in awe of God, and to fear the power of his wrath. If good men have been put into such consternation by it, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (2.) To pity those that are wounded in spirit, and pray earnestly for them, because in that condition they know not how to pray for themselves. (3.) Carefully to keep up good thoughts of God always in our minds, for hard thoughts of him are the inlets of much mischief. (4.) To bless God that we are not in such a disconsolate condition as poor Job was here in; we that walk in the light of the Lord, let us rejoice therein, but rejoice with trembling.

## C H A P. X.

Job owns here that he was full of confusion, ver. 15. and as he was so was his discourse: he knew not what to say, and perhaps sometimes scarce knew what he said. In this chapter, (1.) He complains of the hardships he was under, ver. 1—7. And then comforts himself with this, that he was in the hand of the God that made him, and pleads that, ver. 8—13. (2.) He complains again of the severity of God's dealings with him, ver. 14—17. and then comforts himself with this, that death would put an end to his troubles, ver. 18—22.

1. MY soul is weary of my life, I will leave my complaint upon myself: I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. 3. Is it good unto thee, that thou shouldest oppress? that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? 4. Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth? 5. Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's days? 6. That thou inquirest after my iniquity, and searchest after my sin? 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked, and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand.

Here is, 1. A passionate resolution to persist in his complaint, ver. 1. Being daunted with the dread of God's majesty, so that he could not plead his cause with him, he resolves to give himself some ease by giving vent to his resentments. He begins with a hot word, my soul is weary of my life, weary of this body, and impatient to get clear of it, fallen out with life, and displeased at it, sick of it, and longing for death: through the weakness of grace, he went contrary to the dictates even of nature itself. We should act more like men, did we act more like saints: faith and patience would keep us from being weary of our lives, (and cruel to them, as some read it,) even then, when providence has made them most wearisome to us, for that is to be weary of God's correction. Job being weary of his life, and having ease no other way, resolves to complain, resolves to speak: he will not give vent to his soul by violent hands, but he will give vent to the bitterness of his soul by violent words. Losers think they may have leave to speak, and unbridled passions as well as unbridled appetites are apt to think it an excuse for their excursions, that they cannot help it: but what have we wisdom and grace for, but to keep the mouth as with a bridle? Job's corruption speaks here, yet grace puts in a word: (1.) He will complain, but he will leave his complaint upon himself: he would not impeach God, nor charge him with unrighteousness or unkindness; but, though he knew not particularly the ground of God's controversy with him, and the cause of action, yet in the general, he would suppose it to be in himself, and willingly bear all the blame. (2.) He will speak, but it shall be the bitterness of his soul that he will express, not his settled judgment. If I speak a truth, it is not I, but sin that dwells in me; not my soul, but its bitterness.

2. A humble petition to God. He will speak, but the first word shall be a prayer, and, as I am willing to understand it, it is a good prayer, ver. 2. (1.) That he might be delivered from the sting of his afflictions, which is sin: do not condemn me, do not separate me for ever from thee. Though I lie under the cross, let me not lie under the curse: though I smart by the rod of a father, let me not be cut off by the sword of a judge. Thou dost correct me, I will bear that, as well as I can, but O do not condemn me! It is the comfort of those who are in Christ Jesus, that, though they are in affliction, there is no condemnation to them, Rom. viii. 1. Nay, they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor.



xi. 32. This therefore, we should deprecate above any thing else when we are in affliction: however thou art pleased to deal with me, Lord, do not condemn me; my friends condemn me, but do not thou. (2.) That he might be made acquainted with the true cause of his afflictions, and that is sin too: Lord, *show me wherefore thou contendest with me*. When God afflicts us he contends with us, when he contends with us there is always a reason why and wherefore. He is never angry without a cause, though we are; and it is desirable to know what the reason is, that we may repent of, mortify, and forsake, the sin, for which God hath a controversy with us: in enquiring it out, let conscience have leave to do its office, and to deal faithfully with us, as *Gen. xlii. 21*.

3. A peevish expostulation with God concerning his dealings with him. Now he speaks in the bitterness of his soul indeed; not without some ill-natured reflections upon the righteousness of his God.

1. He thinks it unbecoming the goodness of God, and the mercifulness of his nature, to deal so hardly with his creature, as to lay upon him more than he could bear, *ver. 3. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress?* No, certainly it is not; what he approves not in men, *Lam. iii. 34, 35, 36*, he will not act himself. Lord, in dealing with me thou seemest to oppress thy subject, to despise thy workmanship, and to countenance thine enemies. Now, Lord, what is the meaning of this? Such is thy nature, that this cannot be a pleasure to thee; and such is thy name, that it cannot be an honour to thee; why then dealest thou thus with me? *What profit is there in my blood?* Far be it from Job to think that God did him wrong, but he is quite at a loss how to reconcile his providences with his justice, as good men have often been, and must wait until the day shall declare it. Let us therefore now harbour no hard thoughts of God, because we shall then see there was no cause for them.

2. He thinks it unbecoming the infinite knowledge of God to put his prisoner thus upon the rack, as it were by torture to extort a confession from him, *ver. 4, 5, 6*.

(1.) He is sure God doth not discover things, nor judge of them as men do: he has not eyes of flesh, *ver. 4*. for he is a spirit. Eyes of flesh cannot see in the dark, but darkness hideth not from God; eyes of flesh are but in one place at a time, and can see but a little way, but the eyes of the Lord are in every place, and run to and fro through the whole earth. Many things are hid from eyes of flesh the most curious and piercing. *There is a path, which even the vulture's eye hath not seen*: But nothing is or can be hid from the eye of God, to which all things are naked and open. Eyes of flesh see the outward appearance only, and may be imposed upon by a *deception of the eye*, but God sees every thing truly, his sight cannot be deceived, for he trieth the heart, and is a witness to the thoughts and intents of that. Eyes of flesh discover things gradually, and, when we gain the sight of one thing, we lose the sight of another; but God sees every thing at one view. Eyes of flesh are soon tired, must be closed every night that they may be refreshed, and will shortly be darkened by age and shut up by death; but the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor doth his sight ever decay. *God sees not as man sees*, i. e. he doth not judge as man judgeth, at the best *secundum allegata et probata*, as the thing appears rather than as it is, and too often according to the bias of the affections, passions, prejudices, and interest; but *we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth*, and that truth he knows not by information but by his own inspection. Men discover secret things by search, and examination of witnesses, comparing evidence and giving conjectures upon it, wheedling or forcing the parties concerned to confess. But God needs not any of these ways of discovery, *he sees not as men see*.

(2.) He is sure that as God is not short-sighted like man, so he is not short-lived, *ver. 5. Are thy days as the days of man, few and evil?* Do they roll on in succession, or are they subject to change like the days of man? No, by no means. Men grow wiser by experience, and more knowing by daily observation; with them, truth is the daughter of time, and therefore they must take time for their searches, and, if one experiment fail, must try another: but it is not so with God: to him nothing is past, nothing future, but every thing present. The days of time, by which the life of man is measured, are nothing to the years of eternity, in which the life of God is wrapped up.

(3.) He therefore thinks it strange that God should thus prolong his torture, and continue him under the confinement of his affliction, and neither bring him to a trial nor grant him a release: As if he must take time to enquire after his iniquity, and use means to search after his sin, *ver. 6*. Not as if Job thought God did thus torment him that he might find occasion against him, but his dealings with him had such an aspect as was dishonourable to God, and would tempt men to think him a hard master: Now, Lord, if thou wilt not consult my comfort, consult thine own honour; do something for thy great name, and do not disgrace the throne of thy glory, *Jer. xiv. 21*.

3. He thinks it looked like an abuse of his omnipotence, to keep a poor prisoner in custody, whom he knew to be innocent, only because there was none that could deliver him out of his hand, *ver. 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked*. He had already owned himself a sinner, and guilty before God, but he here stands to it that he was not wicked, not devoted to sin, not an enemy to God, not a dissembler in his religion; that he had not wickedly departed from his God, *Psal. xviii. 21. But there is none that can deliver out of thy hand*, and therefore there is no remedy; I must be content to lie by it, waiting thy time, and throwing myself on thy mercy, in submission to thy sovereign will. Here see, (1.) What ought to quiet us under our troubles; that it is to no purpose to contend with omnipotence. (2.) What will abundantly comfort us, if we are able to appeal to God, as Job here, Lord, *thou knowest that I am not wicked*. I cannot say that I am not wanting, or I am not weak; but, through grace, I can say *I am not wicked*: Thou knowest I am not; for *thou knowest I love thee*.

8. Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. 9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay, and wilt thou bring me into dust again? 10. Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me as cheese? 11. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. 12. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. 13. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee.

In these verses we may observe,

1. How Job eyes God as his creator and preserver, and describes his dependence upon him as the author and upholder of his being. This is one of the first things we are all concerned to know and consider.

(1.) That God made us. He, and not our parents, who were only the instruments of his power and providence in our production. *He made us, and not we ourselves*. His hands have made and fashioned these bodies of ours, and every part of them, *ver. 8*. and they are *fearfully and wonderfully made*: The soul also, which animates the body, is his gift. He takes notice of both here. (1.) The body is made as the clay, *ver. 9*. cast into shape, into this shape, as the clay is formed into a vessel, according to the skill and will of the potter. We are earthen vessels, mean in our original, and soon broken in pieces; made as the clay; let not, therefore, the thing formed say unto him that formed it, *why hast thou made me thus?* We must not be proud of our bodies, because the matter is from the earth; yet not dishonour our bodies, because the mould and shape are from the divine wisdom. The formation of human bodies in the womb is described by an elegant similitude, *ver. 10. Thou hast poured me out like milk*, which is coagulated into cheese: and, by an induction of some particulars, *ver. 11*. though we come into the world naked, yet the body is itself both clothed and armed; the skin and flesh are its clothing; the bones and sinews are its armour, not offensive, but defensive. The vital parts, the heart and lungs, are thus clothed, not to be seen; thus fenced, not to be hurt. The admirable structure of human bodies is an illustrious instance of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator. What pity is it that these bodies should be instruments of unrighteousness, which are capable of being temples of the Holy Ghost! (2.) The soul is the light, the soul is the man, and this is the gift of God; *thou hast granted me life*, breathed into me the breath of life, without which the body would be but a worthless carcass. God is the father of spirits; he made us living souls, and endued us with the powers of reason. Gave us life and favour; and life is a favour, a great favour, more than meat, more than raiment; a distinguishing favour, a favour that puts us into a capacity of receiving other favours. Now Job was in a better mind than he was when he quarrelled with life as a burden, and asked, *why died I not from the womb?* Or by life and favour may be meant life and all the comforts of life, referring to his former prosperity. Time was, when he walked in the light of the divine favour, and thought, as David, that, through that favour, his mountain stood strong.

(2.) That God maintains us: Having lighted the lamp of life, he doth not leave it to burn upon its own stock, but continually supplies it with fresh oil; *thy visitation has preserved my spirit*, kept me alive, protected me from the adversaries of life, the death we are in the midst of, and the dangers we are continually exposed to; and blessed me with all the necessary supports of life, and the daily supplies it needs and craves.

2. How he pleads this with God, and what use he makes of it. He minds God of it, *ver. 9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me*: What then?

1. Thou hast made me, and therefore thou hast a perfect knowledge of me, *Psal. cxxxix. 1—13*. and needest not to examine me by scourging, nor to put me upon the rack for the discovering of what is within me.

2. Thou hast made me as the clay, by an act of sovereignty, and wilt thou, by a like act of sovereignty, unmake me again? If so, I must submit.

3. Wilt thou destroy the work of thine own hands? It is a plea the saints have often used in prayer: *We are thy clay, and thou our potter*, *Isa. lxiv. 8. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me*, *Psal. cxix. 73*. So here, *thou madest me*, and wilt thou destroy me? *ver. 8. Wilt thou bring me into dust again?* *ver. 9. Wilt thou not pity me?* Wilt thou not spare and help me, and stand by the work of thine own hands? *Psal. cxxxviii. 5. Thou madest me and knowest my strength, wilt thou then suffer me to be pressed above measure?* Was I made to be made miserable? Was I preserved only to be reserved for these calamities? If we plead this with ourselves as an inducement to duty, God made me and maintains me, and therefore I will serve him and submit to him, we may plead it with God as an argument for mercy, *Thou hast made me, new-make me: I am thine, save me*. Job knew not how to reconcile God's former favours and his present frowns, but concludes, *ver. 13. These things hast thou hid in thine heart*: Both are according to the counsel of thine own will, and therefore undoubtedly consistent, however they seem. When God thus strangely changeth his way, though we cannot account for it, we are bound to believe there are good reasons for it, hid in his heart, which will be manifested shortly: It is not with us, or in our reach, to assign the cause, but *I know that this is with thee*. Known unto God are all his works.

14. If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. 15. If I be wicked, woe unto me; and, if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head: I am full of confusion, therefore see thou mine affliction. 16. For it increaseth: thou huntest me as a fierce lion; and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me. 17. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me: changes and war are against me. 18. Wherefore, then, hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? O that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! 19. I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. 20. Are not my days few? cease, then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little: 21. Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; 22. A land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

Here is, 1. Job's passionate complaints: On that harsh and unpleasant string he harps much; in which, though he cannot be justified, he may be excused: He complained not for nothing, as the murmuring Israelites; but had cause to complain: If we think it looks ill in him, let it be a warning to us to keep our temper better.

(1.) He complains of the strictness of God's judgment, and the rigour of his proceedings against him, and is ready to call it *summum jus*. (1.) That he took all advantages against him. *If I sin, then thou markest me*, *ver. 14*. If I do but take one false step, misplace a word, or cast a look awry, I shall be sure to hear of it. Conscience, thy deputy, will be sure to upbraid me with it, and to tell me, this gripe, this twitch of pain, is to punish me for that. If God should thus mark iniquities, we are undone, we must say the contrary; though we sin, God doth not deal in extremity with us. (2.) That he prosecuted those advantages to the utmost: *Thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquities*: While his troubles continued, he could not take the comfort of his pardon, nor hear that voice of joy and gladness; so hard is it to see love in God's heart, when we see frowns in his face, and a rod



in his hand. (3.) That, whatever was his character, his case at present was very uncomfortable, *ver. 15.* (1.) If he be wicked, he is certainly undone in the other world, *If I be wicked woe to me.* Note, A sinful state is a woe to the soul. This we should each of us believe, as Job here, with application to ourselves; *If I be wicked, though prosperous, and living in pleasure, yet woe to me.* Some especially, have reason to dread double woes if they be wicked: 1. that have knowledge, that have made great profession of religion, that have been so often under strong convictions, and have made so many fair promises; 1. that was born of so good parents, blessed with a good education, that have lived in good families, and long enjoyed the means of grace, *If I be wicked, woe, and a thousand woes to me.* (2.) If he be righteous, yet he dares not lift up his head: dares not answer as before, *chap. ix. 15.* He is so oppressed and overwhelmed with his troubles, that he cannot look up with any comfort or confidence. Without were fightings, within were fears, so that, between both, he was full of confusion. Not only confusion of face, for the disgrace he was brought down to and the censures of his friends, but confusion of spirit; his mind was in a constant hurry, and he was almost distracted, *Psal. lxxxviii. 15.*

(2.) He complains of the severity of the execution. God (he thought) did not only punish him for every failure, but punish him in a high degree, *ver. 16, 17.* His affliction was, (1.) Grievous, very grievous; marvellous exceeding marvellous. God hunted him as a lion, as a fierce lion hunts and runs down his prey. God was not only strange to him, but shewed himself marvellous upon him, by bringing him into uncommon troubles, and so making him a prodigy, a wonder unto many: All admired that God would inflict, and that Job could bear, so much. That which made his afflictions most grievous was, that he felt God's indignation in them; that was it that made them taste so bitter and lie so heavy: They were God's witnesses against him, tokens of his displeasure; this made the sores of his body wounds in his spirit. (2.) It was growing, still growing worse and worse. This he insists much upon; when he hoped the tide would turn, and begin to ebb, still it flowed higher and higher! His affliction increased, and God's indignation in the affliction; he found himself no better, no way better; these witnesses were renewed against him, that, if one did not reach to convict him, another might. Changes and war were against him: If there was any change with him, it was not for the better; still he was kept in a state of war. As long as we are here in this world, we must expect that the clouds will return after the rain, and perhaps the fiercest and sharpest trials may be reserved for the last. God was at war with him, and it was a great change: He did not use to be so, which aggravated the trouble, and made it truly marvellous. God uses to shew himself kind to his people; if at any time he shews himself otherwise, it is his strange work, his strange act, and he doth it to shew himself marvellous.

(3.) He complains of his life, and that ever he was born to all this trouble and misery, *ver. 18, 19.* If this was designed for my lot, *why was I brought out of the womb,* and not smothered there, or stifled in the birth? This was the language of his passion, and it was a relapse into the same sin he fell into before. He had just now called life a favour, *ver. 12.* yet now he counts it a burden and quarrels with God for giving it, or rather laying it upon him. Mr. Caryl gives a good turn in favour of Job; We may charitably suppose (saith he) that that which troubled Job was, that he was in a condition of life, which, as he conceived, hindered the main end of his life, which was the glorifying of God: His harp was hung on the willow trees, and he was quite out of tune for praising God: Nay he feared lest his trouble should reflect dishonour upon God, and give occasion to his enemies to blaspheme; and therefore he wisheth, *O that I had given up the ghost!* A godly man reckons that he lives to no purpose, if he do not live to the praise and glory of God. But, if that had been his meaning, it was grounded on a mistake, for we may glorify the Lord in the fires. By this use we may make of it, not to be over fond of life, since the case has been such sometimes, even with wise and good men, that they have complained of it. Why should we dread giving up the ghost, or covet to be seen by men, since the time may come when we may be ready to wish we had given up the ghost and no eye had seen us? Why should we inordinately lament the death of our children in their infancy, that are as if they had not been, and are carried from the womb to the grave, when perhaps we ourselves may sometimes wish it had been our own lot?

2. Job's humble requests. He prays,

1. That God would see his affliction, *ver. 15.* take cognisance of his case, and take it into his compassionate consideration. Thus David prays, *Psal. xxv. 18. Look upon mine affliction and my pain.* Thus we should, in our troubles refer ourselves to God, and may comfort themselves with this, that he knows our souls in adversity.

2. That God would grant him some ease. If he could not prevail for the removal of his troubles, yet might he not have some intermission? Lord, let me not always be upon the rack, always in extremity, *O let me alone, that I may take comfort a little!* *ver. 20.* Grant me some respite, some breathing-time, some little enjoyment of myself. This he would reckon a great favour: Those that are not duly thankful for constant ease should think how welcome one hour's ease would be if they were in constant pain. Two things he pleads,

1. That life and its light were very short. *Are not my days few?* *ver. 20.* Yes, certainly they are, very few: Lord, let them not be all miserable, all in the extremity of misery. I have but a little time to live, let me have some comfort of life while it doth last. This plea sustains on the goodness of God's nature, the consideration of which is very comfortable to an afflicted spirit. And, if we would use this as a plea with God for mercy *Are not my days few?* Lord, pity me; we should use it as a plea with ourselves to quicken us to duty. *Are not my days few?* then it concerns me to redeem time, to improve opportunities; what thy hands find to do, to do it with all my might, that I may be ready for the days of eternity, which shall be many.

2. That death and its darkness were very near, and would be very long, *ver. 21, 22.* Lord, give me some ease before I die, i. e. lest I die of my pain. Thus David pleads, *Psal. xiii. 3. Lest I sleep the sleep of death, and then it will be too late to expect relief, for wilt thou shew wonders to the dead!* *Psal. lxxxviii. 10.* Let me have a little comfort before I die, that I may calmly take leave of this world, and not in such confusion as I am now in. Thus earnest should we be for grace, and thus should we plead: Lord, renew me in the inward man; Lord, sanctify me before I die, for then it will never be done.

See how he speaks here of the state of the dead.

1. It is a fixed state, whence we shall not return ever again to live such a life as we now live, *chap. vii. 10.* At death we must bid a final farewell to this world: The body must then be laid where it will lie long, and the soul determined to that state in which it must be for ever. That had need be well done, which is to be done but once, and done for eternity.

2. It is a very melancholy state; so it appears to us. Holy souls, at death, remove to a land of light, where there is no death; but their bodies they leave to a land of darkness and the shadow of death. He heaps up expressions here to the same purpose, to shew that he has dreadful apprehensions of death and the grave as other men naturally have, so that it was only the extreme misery he was in that made him wish for it. Come and

let us look a little into the grave, and we shall find, (1.) That there is no order there, it is without any order: perpetual night, and no succession of day: All there lie on the same level, and there is no distinction between prince and peasant, but the servant is there free from his master, *chap. iii. 19.* No order is observed in bringing people to the grave, not the eldest first, not the richest, not the poorest, and yet every one in his own order, the order appointed by the God of life. (2.) That there is no light there; In the grave there is thick darkness, darkness that cannot be felt indeed, yet cannot but be feared by those that enjoy the light of life. In the grave there is no knowledge, no comfort, no joy, no praising God, no working out our salvation, and therefore no light. Job was so much ashamed others should see his sores, and so much afraid to see them himself, that the darkness of the grave, which would hide them and huddle them up, would upon that account be welcome to him. Darkness comes upon us, and therefore let us walk and work while we have the light with us. The grave being a land of darkness, it is well we have carried thither with our eyes closed, and then it is all one. The grave is, a land of darkness to man; our friends that are gone thither we reckon removed into darkness, *Psal. lxxxviii. 18.* But that it is not so to God will appear by this, that the dust of the bodies of the saints, though scattered, though mingled with other dust, will none of it be lost, for God's eye is upon every grain of it, and it shall be forthcoming in the great day.

## C H A P. XI.

Poor Job's wounds were yet bleeding, his sore still runs and ceaseth not, but none of his friends bring him any oil, any balm; Zophar, the third, pours into them as much vinegar as the two former had done. (1.) He exhibits a very high charge against Job, as proud and false in justifying himself, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) He appeals to God for his conviction, and begs that God would take him to task, *ver. 5.* and that Job might be made sensible, (1.) Of God's unerring wisdom, and his inviolable justice, *ver. 6.* (2.) Of his unsearchable perfections, *ver. 7—9.* (3.) Of his incontestible sovereignty, and uncontrollable power, *ver. 10.* (4.) Of the cognisance he takes of the children of men, *ver. 11, 12.* (5.) He assures him, that, upon his repentance and reformation, *ver. 13, 14.* God would restore him to his former prosperity and safety, *ver. 15—19.* But, if he were wicked it was in vain to expect it, *ver. 20.*

1. THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite and said, 2. Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? 3. Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and, when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? 4. For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. 5. But, O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; 6. And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.

It is sad to see what intemperate passions even wise and good men are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of disputation; of which Zophar here is an instance. Eliphaz began with a very modest preface, *chap. iv. 2.* Bildad was a little more rough upon Job, *chap. viii. 2.* But Zophar falls upon him without mercy, and gives him very ill language; *should a man full of talk be justified?* and *should thy lies make men hold their peace?* Is this the way to comfort Job? No, nor to convince him neither: doth this become one that appears as an advocate for God and his justice? *Tantane animis celestibus ira?* They that engage in controversy will find it very hard to keep their temper. All the wisdom, caution, and resolution, they have will be little enough to prevent their breaking out into such indecencies as we here find Zophar guilty of.

1. He represents Job otherwise, than what he was, *ver. 2, 3.* would have him thought idle and impertinent in his discourse, and one that loved to hear himself talk; gives him the lie, and calls him a mocker, and all this that it might be looked upon as a piece of justice to chastise him. Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, find it necessary to put the worst colours they can upon them and their performances, and, right or wrong, to make them odious. We have read and considered Job's discourses in the foregoing chapters, and have found them full of good sense, and much to the purpose; that, his principles are right, his reasonings strong, and many of his expressions weighty and very considerable, and what there is in them of heat and passion a little candour and charity will excuse and overlook; and yet Zophar here invidiously represents him,

(1.) As a man that never considered what he said, but uttered what came uppermost, only to make a noise with a multitude of words, hoping, by that means to carry his cause, and run down the reprovers. *Should not the multitude of words be answered?* Truly, sometimes it is no great matter whether it be or not: silence perhaps is the best confutation of impertinence, and puts the greatest contempt upon it. *Answer not a fool according to his folly.* But, if it be answered, let reason and grace have the answering of it, not pride and passion. *Should a man full of talk* (Mur. a man of lips, that is all tongue, *vox & preterea nihil*) *be justified?* Should he be justified in his loquacity, as in effect he is, if he be not reprov'd for it? No; for, in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin. Should he be justified by it? Shall many words pass for valid pleas? Shall he carry the day with the flourishes of language? No, he shall not be accepted with God, or any wise man, for his much speaking, *Mat. vi. 7.*

(2.) As a man that made no conscience of what he said, a liar, and one that hoped, by the impudence of lies, to silence his adversaries. *Should thy lies make men hold their peace?* A mocker, one that bantered all mankind, and knew how to put false colours upon any thing, and was not ashamed to impose upon every one that talked with him. *When thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?* Is it not time to speak, to stem such a violent tide as this? Job was not mad, but spoke the words of truth and soberness, and yet is thus misrepresented. Eliphaz and Bildad had answered him, and said what they could to make him ashamed, it was therefore no instance of Zophar's generosity to set upon one so violently who was already thus bated; three to one were great odds.

2. He chargeth Job with saying that which he had not said, *ver. 4.* *Thou hast said, My doctrine is pure.* And what if he had said so? It is true that Job was sound in the faith, and orthodox in his judgment, and spoke better of God than his friends did: If he had expressed himself unwarily, yet it did not therefore follow but that his doctrine was true; but he chargeth him with saying, *I am clean in thine eyes.* Job had not said so: he had indeed said, *thou knowest that I am not wicked*, *chap. x. 7.* but he had also said, *I have sinned*, and never pretended to a spotless perfection.



xi. 32. This therefore, we should deprecate above any thing else when we are in affliction: however thou art pleased to deal with me, Lord, do not condemn me; my friends condemn me, but do not thou. (2.) That he might be made acquainted with the true cause of his afflictions, and that is sin too: Lord, *show me wherefore thou contendest with me*. When God afflicts us he contends with us, when he contends with us there is always a reason why and wherefore. He is never angry without a cause, though we are; and it is desirable to know what the reason is, that we may repent of, mortify, and forsake, the sin, for which God hath a controversy with us: in enquiring it out, let conscience have leave to do its office, and to deal faithfully with us, as *Gen. xlii. 21*.

3. A peevish expostulation with God concerning his dealings with him. Now he speaks in the bitterness of his soul indeed; not without some ill-natured reflections upon the righteousness of his God.

1. He thinks it unbecoming the goodness of God, and the mercifulness of his nature, to deal so harshly with his creature, as to lay upon him more than he could bear, *ver. 3. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress?* No, certainly it is not; what he approves not in men, *Lam. iii. 34, 35, 36*, he will not act himself. Lord, in dealing with me thou seemest to oppress thy subject, to despise thy workmanship, and to countenance thine enemies. Now, Lord, what is the meaning of this? Such is thy nature, that this cannot be a pleasure to thee; and such is thy name, that it cannot be an honour to thee; why then dealest thou thus with me? *What profit is there in my blood?* Far be it from Job to think that God did him wrong, but he is quite at a loss how to reconcile his providences with his justice, as good men have often been, and must wait until the day shall declare it. Let us therefore now harbour no hard thoughts of God, because we shall then see there was no cause for them.

2. He thinks it unbecoming the infinite knowledge of God to put his prisoner thus upon the rack, as it were by torture to extort a confession from him, *ver. 4, 5, 6*.

(1.) He is sure God doth not discover things, nor judge of them as men do: he *has not eyes of flesh*, *ver. 4*, for he is a spirit. Eyes of flesh cannot see in the dark, but darkness hideth not from God; eyes of flesh are but in one place at a time, and can see but a little way, but the eyes of the Lord are in every place, and run to and fro through the whole earth. Many things are hid from eyes of flesh the most curious and piercing. *There is a path, which even the vulture's eye hath not seen*: But nothing is or can be hid from the eye of God, to which all things are naked and open. Eyes of flesh see the outward appearance only, and may be imposed upon by a *deception*, but God sees every thing truly, his sight cannot be deceived, for he trieth the heart, and is a witness to the thoughts and intents of that. Eyes of flesh discover things gradually, and, when we gain the sight of one thing, we lose the sight of another; but God sees every thing at one view. Eyes of flesh are soon tired, must be closed every night that they may be refreshed, and will shortly be darkened by age and shut up by death; but the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor doth his sight ever decay. *God sees not as men sees*, i. e. he doth not judge as man judgeth, at the best *secundum allegata et probata*, as the thing appears rather than as it is, and too often according to the bias of the affections, passions, prejudices, and interest; but we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that truth he knows not by information but by his own inspection. Men discover secret things by search, and examination of witnesses, comparing evidence and giving conjectures upon it, wheedling or forcing the parties concerned to confess. But God needs not any of these ways of discovery, *he sees not as men sees*.

(2.) He is sure that as God is not short-sighted like man, so he is not short-lived, *ver. 5. Are thy days as the days of man*, few and evil? Do they roll on in succession, or are they subject to change like the days of man? No, by no means. Men grow wiser by experience, and more knowing by daily observation; with them, truth is the daughter of time, and therefore they must take time for their searches, and, if one experiment fail, must try another: but it is not so with God: to him nothing is past, nothing future, but every thing present. The days of time, by which the life of man is measured, are nothing to the years of eternity, in which the life of God is wrapped up.

(3.) He therefore thinks it strange that God should thus prolong his torture, and continue him under the confinement of his affliction, and neither bring him to a trial nor grant him a release: As if he must take time to enquire after his iniquity, and use means to search after his sin, *ver. 6*. Not as if Job thought God did thus torment him that he might find occasion against him, but his dealings with him had such an aspect as was dishonourable to God, and would tempt men to think him a hard master: Now, Lord, if thou wilt not consult my comfort, consult thine own honour; do something for thy great name, and do not disgrace the throne of thy glory, *Jer. xiv. 21*.

3. He thinks it looked like an abuse of his omnipotence, to keep a poor prisoner in custody, whom he knew to be innocent, only because there was none that could deliver him out of his hand, *ver. 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked*. He had already owned himself a sinner, and guilty before God, but he here stands to it that he was not wicked, not devoted to sin, not an enemy to God, not a dissembler in his religion; that he *had not wickedly departed from his God*, *Psal. xviii. 21*. But there is none that can deliver out of thy hand, and therefore there is no remedy; I must be content to lie by it, waiting thy time, and throwing myself on thy mercy, in submission to thy sovereign will. Here see, (1.) What ought to quiet us under our troubles; that it is to no purpose to contend with omnipotence. (2.) What will abundantly comfort us, if we are able to appeal to God, as Job here, Lord, *thou knowest that I am not wicked*. I cannot say that I am not wanting, or I am not weak; but, through grace, I can say *I am not wicked*: Thou knowest I am not; for *thou knowest I love thee*.

8. Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. 9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay, and wilt thou bring me into dust again? 10. Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me as cheese? 11. Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. 12. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. 13. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee.

In these verses we may observe,

1. How Job eyes God as his creator and preserver, and describes his dependence upon him as the author and upholder of his being. This is one of the first things we are all concerned to know and consider.

(1.) That God made us. He, and not our parents, who were only the instruments of his power and providence in our production. *He made us, and not we ourselves*. His hands have made and fashioned these bodies of ours, and every part of them, *ver. 8*, and they are *fearfully and wonderfully made*: The soul also, which animates the body, is his gift. He takes notice of both here. (1.) The body is made as the clay, *ver. 9*, cast into shape, into this shape, as the clay is formed into a vessel, according to the skill and will of the potter. We are earthen vessels, mean in our original, and soon broken in pieces; made as the clay; let not, therefore, the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? We must not be proud of our bodies, because the matter is from the earth; yet not dishonour our bodies, because the mould and shape are from the divine wisdom. The formation of human bodies in the womb is described by an elegant similitude, *ver. 10. Thou hast poured me out like milk*, which is coagulated into cheese: and, by an induction of some particulars, *ver. 11*, though we come into the world naked, yet the body is itself both clothed and armed; the skin and flesh are its clothing; the bones and sinews are its armour, not offensive, but defensive. The vital parts, the heart and lungs, are thus clothed, not to be seen; thus fenced, not to be hurt. The admirable structure of human bodies is an illustrious instance of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator. What pity is it that these bodies should be instruments of unrighteousness, which are capable of being temples of the Holy Ghost! (2.) The soul is the light, the soul is the man, and this is the gift of God; *thou hast granted me life*, breathed into me the breath of life, without which the body would be but a worthless carcase. God is the father of spirits; he made us living souls, and endued us with the powers of reason. Gave us life and favour; and life is a favour, a great favour, more than meat, more than raiment; a distinguishing favour, a favour that puts us into a capacity of receiving other favours. Now Job was in a better mind than he was when he quarrelled with life as a burden, and asked, *why died I not from the womb?* Or by life and favour may be meant life and all the comforts of life, referring to his former prosperity. Time was, when he walked in the light of the divine favour, and thought, as David, that, through that favour, his mountain stood strong.

(2.) That God maintains us: Having lighted the lump of life, he doth not leave it to burn upon its own stock, but continually supplies it with fresh oil; *thy visitation has preserved my spirit*, kept me alive, protected me from the adversaries of life, the death we are in the midst of, and the dangers we are continually exposed to; and blessed me with all the necessary supports of life, and the daily supplies it needs and craves.

2. How he pleads this with God, and what use he makes of it. He minds God of it, *ver. 9. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me*: What then?

1. Thou hast made me, and therefore thou hast a perfect knowledge of me, *Psal. cxxxix. 1—13*, and needest not to examine me by scourging, nor to put me upon the rack for the discovering of what is within me.

2. Thou hast made me as the clay, by an act of sovereignty, and wilt thou, by a like act of sovereignty, unmake me again? If so, I must submit.

3. Wilt thou destroy the work of thine own hands? It is a plea the saints have often used in prayer: *We are thy clay, and thou our potter*, *1Sa. xiv. 8. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me*, *Psal. cxix. 73*. So here, *thou madest me*, and wilt thou destroy me? *ver. 8. Wilt thou bring me into dust again?* *ver. 9. Wilt thou not pity me?* Wilt thou not spare and help me, and stand by the work of thine own hands? *Psal. cxxxviii. 9. Thou madest me and knowest my strength*, wilt thou then suffer me to be pressed alive measure? Was I made to be made miserable? Was I preserved only to be reserved for these calamities? If we plead this with ourselves as an inducement to duty, God made me and maintains me, and therefore I will serve him and submit to him, we may plead it with God as an argument for mercy, *Thou hast made me, now make me: I am thine, save me*. Job knew not how to reconcile God's former favours and his present frowns, but concludes, *ver. 13. These things hast thou hid in thine heart*: Both are according to the counsel of thine own will, and therefore undoubtedly consistent, however they seem. When God thus strangely changeth his way, though we cannot account for it, we are bound to believe there are good reasons for it, hid in his heart, which will be manifested shortly: It is not with us, or in our reach, to assign the cause, but *I know that this is with thee*. Known unto God are all his works.

14. If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. 15. If I be wicked, woe unto me; and, if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head: I am full of confusion, therefore see thou mine affliction. 16. For it increaseth: thou huntest me as a fierce lion; and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me. 17. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me: changes and war are against me. 18. Wherefore, then, hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? O that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! 19. I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. 20. Are not my days few? cease, then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little: 21. Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; 22. A land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

Here is, 1. Job's passionate complaints: On that harsh and unpleasant string he harps much, in which, though he cannot be justified, he may be excused: He complained not for nothing, as the murmuring Israelites; but had cause to complain: If we think it looks ill in him, let it be a warning to us to keep our temper better.

(1.) He complains of the strictness of God's judgment, and the rigour of his proceedings against him, and is ready to call it *summum jus*. (1.) That he took all advantages against him. *If I sin, then thou markest me*, *ver. 14*. If I do but take one false step, misplace a word, or cast a look awry, I shall be sure to hear of it. Conscience, thy deputy, will be sure to upbraid me with it, and to tell me, this gripe, this twitch of pain, is to punish me for that. If God should thus mark iniquities, we are undone, we must fly the contrary; though we sin, God doth not deal in extremity with us. (2.) That he prosecuted those advantages to the utmost: *Thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquities*. While his troubles continued, he could not take the comfort of his pardon, nor hear that voice of joy and gladness; so hard is it to see love in God's heart, when we see frowns in his face, and a rod



in his hand. (3.) That, whatever was his character, his case at present was very uncomfortable, *ver. 15.* (1.) If he be wicked, he is certainly undone in the other world, *If I be wicked woe to me.* Note, A sinful state is a woful state. This we should each of us believe, as Job here, with application to ourselves; *If I be wicked, though prosperous, and living in pleasure, yet woe to me.* Some especially, have reason to dread double woes if they be wicked: 1, that have knowledge, that have made great profession of religion, that have been so often under strong convictions, and have made so many fair promises; 1, that was born of so good parents, blessed with a good education, that have lived in good families, and long enjoyed the means of grace, *If I be wicked, woe, and a thousand woes to me.* (2.) If he be *righteous*, yet he dares not *lift up his head*: dares not answer as before, *chap. ix. 15.* He is so oppressed and overwhelmed with his troubles, that he cannot look up with any comfort or confidence. Without were fightings, within were fears, so that, between both, he was full of confusion. Not only confusion of face, for the disgrace he was brought down to and the censures of his friends, but confusion of spirit; his mind was in a constant hurry, and he was almost distracted, *Psal. lxxxviii. 15.*

(2.) He complains of the severity of the execution. God (he thought) did not only punish him for every failure, but punish him *in a high degree*, *ver. 16, 17.* His affliction was, (1.) Grievous, very grievous; marvellous exceeding marvellous. God hunted him as a lion, as a fierce lion hunts and runs down his prey. God was not only strange to him, but shewed himself marvellous upon him, by bringing him into uncommon troubles, and so making him a prodigy, a wonder unto many: All admired that God would inflict, and that Job could bear, so much. That which made his afflictions most grievous was, that he felt God's indignation in them; that was it that made them taste so bitter and lie so heavy: They were God's witnesses against him, tokens of his displeasure; this made the sores of his body wounds in his spirit. (2.) It was growing, still growing worse and worse. This he insists much upon; when he hoped the tide would turn, and begin to ebb, still it flowed higher and higher! His affliction increased, and God's indignation in the affliction; he found himself no better, no way better; these witnesses were renewed against him, that, if one did not reach to convict him, another might. Changes and war were against him: If there was any change with him, it was not for the better; still he was kept in a state of war. As long as we are here in this world, we must expect that the clouds will return after the rain, and perhaps the forest and sharpest trials may be reserved for the last. God was at war with him, and it was a great change: He did not use to be so, which aggravated the trouble, and made it truly marvellous. God uses to shew himself kind to his people; if at any time he shews himself otherwise, it is his strange work, his strange act, and he doth it to shew himself marvellous.

(3.) He complains of his life, and that ever he was born to all this trouble and misery, *ver. 18, 19.* If this was designed for my lot, *why was I brought out of the womb*, and not smothered there, or it fled in the birth? This was the language of his passion, and it was a relapse into the same sin he fell into before. He had just now called life a favour, *ver. 12.* yet now he counts it a burden and quarrels with God for giving it, or rather laying it upon him. Mr. Caryl gives a good turn in favour of Job; We may charitably suppose (saith he) that that which troubled Job was, that he was in a condition of life, which, as he conceived, hindered the main end of his life, which was the glorifying of God: His harp was hung on the willow trees, and he was quite out of tune for praising God: Nay he feared lest his trouble should reflect dishonour upon God, and give occasion to his enemies to blaspheme; and therefore he wisheth, *O that I had given up the ghost!* A godly man reckons that he lives to no purpose, if he do not live to the praise and glory of God. But, if that had been his meaning, it was grounded on a mistake, for we may glorify the Lord in the fires. By this use we may make of it, not to be over fond of life, since the case has been such sometimes, even with wife and good men, that they have complained of it. Why should we dread giving up the ghost, or covet to be seen by men, since the time may come when we may be ready to wish we had given up the ghost and no eye had seen us? Why should we inordinately lament the death of our children in their infancy, that are as if they had not been, and are carried from the womb to the grave, when perhaps we ourselves may sometimes wish it had been our own lot?

2. Job's humble requests. He prays,

1. That God would *see his affliction*, *ver. 15.* take cognisance of his case, and take it into his compassionate consideration. Thus David prays, *Psal. xxv. 18. Look upon mine affliction and my pain.* Thus we should, in our troubles refer ourselves to God, and may comfort themselves with this, that he knows our souls in adversity.

2. That God would grant him some ease. If he could not prevail for the removal of his troubles, yet might he not have some intermission? Lord, let me not always be upon the rack, always in extremity, *O let me alone, that I may take comfort a little!* *ver. 20.* Grant me some respite, some breathing-time, some little enjoyment of myself. This he would reckon a great favour: Those that are not duly thankful for constant ease should think how welcome one hour's ease would be if they were in constant pain. Two things he pleads,

1. That life and its light were very short. *Are not my days few?* *ver. 20.* Yes, certainly they are, very few: Lord, let them not be all miserable, all in the extremity of misery. I have but a little time to live, let me have some comfort of life while it doth last. This plea suits on the goodness of God's nature, the consideration of which is very comfortable to an afflicted spirit. And, if we would use this as a plea with God for mercy *Are not my days few?* Lord, pity me; we should use it as a plea with ourselves to quicken us to duty. *Are not my days few?* then it concerns me to redeem time, to improve opportunities; what thy hands find to do, to do it with all my might, that I may be ready for the days of eternity, which shall be many.

2. That death and its darkness were very near, and would be very long, *ver. 21, 22.* Lord, give me some ease before I die, i. e. lest I die of my pain. Thus David pleads, *Psal. xlii. 3. Lest I sleep the sleep of death, and then it will be too late to expect relief, for wilt thou shew wonders to the dead!* *Psal. lxxxviii. 10.* Let me have a little comfort before I die, that I may calmly take leave of this world, and not in such confusion as I am now in. Thus earnest should we be for grace, and thus should we plead: Lord, renew me in the inward man; Lord, sanctify me before I die, for then it will never be done.

See how he speaks here of the state of the dead.

1. It is a fixed state, whence we shall not return ever again to live such a life as we now live, *chap. vii. 10.* At death we must bid a final farewell to this world: The body must then be laid where it will lie long, and the soul determined to that state in which it must be for ever. That had need be well done, which is to be done but once, and done for eternity.

2. It is a very melancholy state; so it appears to us. Holy souls, at death, remove to a land of light, where there is no death; but their bodies they leave to a land of darkness and the shadow of death. He heaps up expressions here to the same purpose, to shew that he has dreadful apprehensions of death and the grave as other men naturally have, so that it was only the extreme misery he was in that made him wish for it. Come and

let us look a little into the grave, and we shall find, (1.) That there is no order there, it is without any order: perpetual night, and no succession of day: All there lie on the same level, and there is no distinction between prince and peasant, but the servant is there free from his master, *chap. iii. 19.* No order is observed in bringing people to the grave, not the eldest first, not the richest, not the poorest, and yet every one in his own order, the order appointed by the God of life. (2.) That there is no light there; In the grave there is thick darkness, darkness that cannot be felt indeed, yet cannot but be feared by those that enjoy the light of life. In the grave there is no knowledge, no comfort, no joy, no praising God, no working out our salvation, and therefore no light. Job was so much ashamed others should see his sores, and so much afraid to see them himself, that the darkness of the grave, which would hide them and hidele them up, would upon that account be welcome to him. Darkness comes upon us, and therefore let us walk and work while we have the light with us. The grave being a land of darkness, it is well we have carried thither with our eyes closed, and then it is all one. The grave is, a land of darkness to man; our friends that are gone thither we reckon removed into darkness, *Psal. lxxxviii. 18.* But that it is not so to God will appear by this, that the dust of the bodies of the saints, though scattered, though mingled with other dust, will none of it be lost, for God's eye is upon every grain of it, and it shall be forthcoming in the great day.

## C H A P. XI.

Poor Job's wounds were yet bleeding, his sore still runs and ceaseth not, but none of his friends bring him any oil, any balm; Zophar, the third, pours into them as much vinegar as the two former had done. (1.) He exhibits a very high charge against Job, as proud and false in justifying himself; *ver. 1—4.* (2.) He appeals to God for his conviction, and begs that God would take him to task, *ver. 5.* and that Job might be made sensible, (1.) Of God's unerring wisdom, and his inviolable justice, *ver. 6.* (2.) Of his unsearchable perfections, *ver. 7—9.* (3.) Of his incontestible sovereignty, and uncontrollable power, *ver. 10.* (4.) Of the cognisance he takes of the children of men, *ver. 11, 12.* (5.) He assures him, that, upon his repentance and reformation, *ver. 13, 14.* God would restore him to his former prosperity and safety, *ver. 15—19.* But, if he were wicked it was in vain to expect it, *ver. 20.*

1. THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite and said, 2. Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified? 3. Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and, when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed? 4. For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. 5. But, O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; 6. And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.

It is sad to see what intemperate passions even wise and good men are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of disputation; of which Zophar here is an instance. Eliphaz began with a very modest preface, *chap. iv. 2.* Bildad was a little more rough upon Job, *chap. viii. 2.* But Zophar falls upon him without mercy, and gives him very ill language; *Should a man full of talk be justified?* and *should thy lies make men hold their peace?* Is this the way to comfort Job? No, nor to convince him neither: doth this become one that appears as an advocate for God and his justice? *Tantane animis celestibus irae?* They that engage in controversy will find it very hard to keep their temper. All the wisdom, caution, and resolution, they have will be little enough to prevent their breaking out into such indecencies as we here find Zophar guilty of.

1. He represents Job otherwise, than what he was, *ver. 2, 3.* would have him thought idle and impertinent in his discourse, and one that loved to hear himself talk; gives him the lie, and calls him a mocker, and all this that it might be looked upon as a piece of justice to chastise him. Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, find it necessary to put the worst colours they can upon them and their performances, and, right or wrong, to make them odious. We have read and considered Job's discourses in the foregoing chapters, and have found them full of good sense, and much to the purpose; that, his principles are right, his reasonings strong, and many of his expressions weighty and very considerable, and what there is in them of heat and passion a little candour and charity will excuse and overlook; and yet Zophar here invidiously represents him,

(1.) As a man that never considered what he said, but uttered what came uppermost, only to make a noise with a multitude of words, hoping, by that means to carry his cause, and run down the reprovers. *Should not the multitude of words be answered?* Truly, sometimes it is no great matter whether it be or not: silence perhaps is the best confutation of impertinence, and puts the greatest contempt upon it. *Answer not a fool according to his folly.* But, if it be answered, let reason and grace have the answering of it, not pride and passion. *Should a man full of talk* (Mar. a man of lips, that is all tongue, *vox & preterea nihil*) *be justified?* Should he be justified in his loquacity, as in effect he is, if he be not reprov'd for it? No; for, *in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin.* Should he be justified by it? Shall many words pass for valid pleas? Shall he carry the day with the flourishes of language? No, he shall not be accepted with God, or any wise man, *for his much speaking*, *Mat. vi. 7.*

(2.) As a man that made no conscience of what he said, a liar, and one that hoped, by the impudence of lies, to silence his adversaries. *Should thy lies make men hold their peace?* A mocker, one that bantered all mankind, and knew how to put false colours upon any thing, and was not ashamed to impose upon every one that talked with him. *When thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?* Is it not time to speak, to shew such a violent tide as this? Job was not mad, but spoke the words of truth and soberness, and yet is thus misrepresented. Eliphaz and Bildad had answered him, and said what they could to make him ashamed, it was therefore no instance of Zophar's generosity to set upon one so violently who was already thus bated; three to one were great odds.

2. He chargeth Job with saying that which he had not said, *ver. 4.* *Thou hast said, My doctrine is pure.* And what if he had said so? It is true that Job was found in the faith, and orthodox in his judgment, and spoke better of God than his friends did: If he had expressed himself unwarily, yet it did not therefore follow but that his doctrine was true; but he chargeth him with saying, *I am clean in thine eyes.* Job had not said so; he had indeed said, *thou knowest that I am not wicked*, *chap. x. 7.* but he had, also said, *I have sinned*, and never pretended to a spotless perfection.



He had indeed maintained, that he was not a hypocrite, as they charged him; but thence to infer that he would not own himself a sinner was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions of our brethren that they will bear, but contenders are tempted to put the worst.

3. He appeals to God, and wisheth him to appear against Job. So very confident is he that Job is in the wrong, that nothing will serve him but that God must presently appear to silence and condemn him. We are commonly ready, with too much assurance, to interest God in our quarrels; and to conclude, that, if he would but speak, he would take our part and speak for us: as Zophar here, *O that God would speak!* for he would certainly open his lips against thee: whereas when God did speak, he opened his lips for Job against his three friends. We ought, indeed, to leave all controversies to be determined by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth, but they are not always in the right that are most forward to appeal to that judgment, and prejudge it against their antagonists.

Zophar despairing to convince Job himself, and therefore desires God would convince him of two things, which it is good for every one of us duly to consider, and under all our afflictions cheerfully to confess.

1. The unsearchable depth of God's counsels. Zophar cannot pretend to do it, but he desires that God himself would shew Job so much of the secrets of the divine wisdom, as might convince him that they are at least double to that which is, *ver. 6.* Note, (1.) There are secrets in the divine wisdom: *arcana imperii.* God's way is in the sea; clouds and darkness are round about him: he has reasons to state which we cannot fathom, and must not pry into. (2.) What we know of God is nothing to what we cannot know. What is hid is more than double to what appears to us to be. *Eph. iii. 9.* (3.) It will help very much to silence us, under the afflicting hand of God, to adore the depth of those divine counsels which we cannot find the bottom of. (4.) God knows a great deal more evil by us, than we do by ourselves; so some understand it. When God gave David a sight and sense of sin, he saith that he had, *in the hidden part, made him to know wisdom, Psal. li. 6.*

2. The unexceptionable justice of his proceedings: know, therefore, that how sore ever the correction is that thou art under, *God exalteth of thee, less than thine iniquity deserves;* or as some read it, *he remits thee part of thine iniquity,* and doth not deal with thee according to the full demerit of it. Note, 1. When the debt of duty is not paid, it is justice to insist upon the debt of punishment. 2. Whatever punishment is inflicted upon us in this world, we must own that it is less than our iniquities deserve; and, therefore, instead of complaining of our troubles, we must be thankful that we are out of hell, *Lam. iii. 39.—Psal. ciii. 10.*

7. Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? *It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?* 9. The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. 10. If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him? 11. For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it? 12. For vain men would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.

Zophar here speaks very good things concerning God, and his greatness and glory; concerning man, and his vanity, and folly: these two compared together, and duly considered, will have a mighty influence upon our submission to the divine providence in all the disposals of it.

1. See here what God is, and let him be adored,

(1.) He is an incomprehensible being, infinite, and immense, whose nature and perfections our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conceptions of, and whose counsels and actions we cannot therefore without the greatest presumption, pass a judgment upon. We, that are so little acquainted with the divine nature, are incompetent judges of the divine providence; and, when we censure the dispensations of it, we talk of things that we do not understand. We cannot find out God, how dare we then find fault with him: Zophar here shews,

(1.) That God's nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our understandings. *Canst thou find out God? find him out to perfection? No, What canst thou do? What canst thou know?* *ver. 7, 8.* Thou, a poor, weak, short-sighted creature, a worm of the earth, that art but of yesterday? Thou, though never so inquisitive after him, never so desirous and industrious to find him out, yet dar'st thou attempt the search, or canst thou hope to speed it? We may, by searching, find God, *Acts xvii. 27.* but we cannot find him out in any thing he is pleased to conceal: we may apprehend him, but cannot comprehend him; may know that he is, but cannot know what he is: the eye can see the ocean, but not see over it: we may, by a humble, diligent, and believing search, find out something of God, but cannot find him out to perfection: may know, but cannot know fully, what God is, nor find out his work from the beginning to the end, *Ecc. iii. 11.* Note, God is unsearchable. The ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, nor the spaces of his immensity measured; the depths of his wisdom cannot be fathomed, nor the reaches of his power bounded; the brightness of his glory can never be described, nor the treasures of his goodness inventoried. This is a good reason why we should always speak of God with humility and caution, and never prescribe to him or quarrel with him; why we should be thankful for what he has revealed of himself, and long to be there where we shall see him as he is, *1 Cor. xii. 9, 10.*

(2.) That it infinitely exceeds the limits of the whole creation. It is higher than heaven, so some read it; deeper than hell, the great abyss; longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, many parts of which are to this day undiscovered, and more were then. It is quite out of our reach to comprehend God's nature, *such knowledge is too wonderful for us, Psal. cxxxix. 6.* We cannot fathom God's designs, nor find out the reasons of his proceedings: his judgments are a great deep. St. Paul attributes such unmeasurable dimensions to the divine love as Zophar here attributes to the divine wisdom, and yet recommends it to our acquaintance, *Eph. iii. 18. That ye may know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ.*

(2.) God is a sovereign Lord, *ver. 10.* If he cut off by death, (Marg. If he make a change, for death is a change, if he make a change in nations, in families, in the posture of our affairs,) if he shut up in prison or in the net of affliction, *Psal. lxxvi. 11.* if he seize any creature as a hunter doth his prey, he will gather it, so bishop Patrick; and who shall force him to restore? Or, if he gather together, as tares for the fire, or, if he gather to himself man's spirit and breath, (Job. xxxiv. 14.) then who can hinder him? Who can either arrest the sentence, or oppose the execution? Who can controul his power, or arraign his wisdom and justice? If he that made all out of nothing think fit to reduce all to nothing, or to their first

chaos again; if he that separated between light and darkness, day and night, at first, please to gather them together again; if he that made unmake; who can turn him away, alter his mind, or stay his hand, impede or impeach his proceedings?

(3.) God is a strict and a just observer of the children of men, *ver. 11. He knows vain men.* We know little of him, but he knows us perfectly: he sees wickedness also, not to approve it. *Job. i. 13.* but to annul it upon men. (1.) He observes vain men; such all are, *every man at his left estate, is altogether vanity;* and he considers it in his dealings with them. He knows what he projects and hopes of vain men are, and can blast and defeat them, the workings of their foolish fancies, and sit in heaven and laughs at them. He takes knowledge of the vanity of men, *i. e.* their little sins, so some; their vain thoughts, and vain words, and unsteadiness in that which is good. (2.) He observes ill men: he sees wickedness also, though acted never so secretly, and never so artfully palliated and disguised. All the wickedness of the wicked is naked and open before the all-seeing eye of God; *will he not then consider it?* Yes, certainly he will, and will reckon for it, though for a time he seems to keep silence.

2. See here what man is, and let him be humbled, *ver. 12.* God sees this concerning vain man, that he would be wise, would be thought so, though he is born like a wild ass's colt, so foolish and foolish, unteachable and untameable: see what man is, (1.) He is a vain creature; empty; so the word is: God made him full, but he emptied himself, impoverished himself, and now he is *vaca*, a creature that has nothing in him. (2.) He is a foolish creature, become like the beasts that perish, *Psal. xlix. 20.—xxiii. 22.* an idiot born like an ass, the most stupid animal: an ass's colt, not yet brought to any service: if ever he come to be good for any thing it is owing to the grace of Christ, who once, in the day of his triumph, served himself of an ass's colt. (3.) He is a wilful ungovernable creature. An ass's colt may be good for something, but the wild ass's colt will never be reclaimed, nor regards the crying of the driver: see Job xxxix. 5, 6, 7. Man thinks himself as much at liberty, and his own master, as the wild ass's colt doth, that is used to the wilderness, *Jer. ii. 24.* eager to gratify his own appetites and passions. (4.) Yet he is a proud creature and self-conceited. He would be wise, would be thought so, values himself upon the honour of wisdom, though he will not submit himself to the laws of wisdom. He would be wise, *i. e.* He reacheth after forbidden wisdom, and, like his first parents, aiming to be wise above what is written, loath the tree of life for the tree of knowledge. Now, is such a creature as this fit to contend with God, or call him to an account? Did we but better know God and ourselves, we should better know how to carry ourselves to God.

13. If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him: 14. If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. 15. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot, yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear: 16. Because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: 17. And thine age shall be clearer than the noon day: thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. 18. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety. 19. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee. 20. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.

Zophar, as the other two, here encourageth Job to hope for better times if he would but come to a better temper.

1. He gives him good counsel, *ver. 13, 14.* as Eliphaz did, *chap. v. 3.* and Bildad, *chap. viii. 5.* He would have him repent and return to God, and observe the steps of that return.

(1.) He must look within, and get his mind changed, and the tree made good. He must prepare his heart; there the work of conversation and reformation must begin. The heart that wandered from God must be reduced; that was defiled with sin, and put into disorder, must be cleansed and put in order again; that was wavering, and unfixed, must be settled and established; so the word here signifies: the heart is then prepared to seek God, when it has determined and fully resolved to make a business of it, and to go through with it.

(2.) He must look up, and stretch out his hands towards God: *i. e.* must stir up himself to take hold on God; must pray to him with earnestness and importunity, striving in prayer and with expectation to receive mercy and grace from him. To give the hand to the Lord signifies to yield ourselves to him and to the covenant with him, *2 Chron. xxx. 8.* This Job must do, and, for the doing of it, must prepare his heart. Job had prayed, but Zophar would have him to pray in a better manner, not as an appellant, but as a petitioner, and humble supplicant.

(3.) He must amend what was amiss in his own conversation, else his prayers would be ineffectual, *ver. 14. If iniquity be in thine hand, i. e.* If there be any sin, which thou dost yet live in the practice of, put it far away, forsake it with detestation and a holy indignation, steadfastly resolving not to return to it, nor ever to have any thing more to do with it, *Ezek. xviii. 31. Hos. xiv. 9. Isa. xxx. 22.* If any of the gains of iniquity, any goods gotten by fraud or oppression, be in thine hand, make restitution of them, as Zaccheus, *Luke xix. 8.* and shake thy hand from holding them, *Isa. xxxiii. 15.* The guilt of sin is not removed, if the gain of sin be not restored.

(4.) He must do his utmost to reform his family too. Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles; let not thy house harbour or shelter any wicked persons, any wicked practices, or any wealth gotten by wickedness. He suspected that Job's great household had been ill-governed, and that, where there are many, there are many wicked, and that the ruin of his family was the punishment of the wickedness of it: and therefore, if he expected God should return to him, he must reform what was amiss there, and, though wickedness might come into his tabernacles, he must not suffer it to dwell there, *Psal. ci. 3, &c.*

2. He assures him of comfort if he took his counsel, *ver. 15, &c.* If he would repent and reform, he should without doubt be easy and happy, and all would be well. Perhaps Zophar might insinuate, that, unless God did speedily make such a change as this in his condition, he and his friends would be confirmed in their opinion of him as a hypocrite and a dissembler with God: but however, it speaks a great truth, that the works of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever, *Isa. xxxiii. 17.*



Those that sincerely turn to God may expect,

1. A holy confidence towards God. Then shalt thou lift up thy face towards heaven without spot; thou mayest come boldly to the throne of grace, and not with that terror and amazement expressed, chap. ix. 34. If our hearts condemn us not for hypocrisy and impenitency, then have we confidences in our approaches to God and expectations from him, 1 John iii. 21. If we are looked upon in the face of the Anointed, our faces, that were dejected, may be lifted up; that were polluted, being washed with the blood of Christ, may be lifted up without spot. We may draw near, in full assurance of faith, when we are sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb. x. 22. Some understand this of the clearing up of his credit before men, Psal. xxxvii. 6. If we make our peace with God, we may with cheerfulness look our friends in the face.

2. A holy composure in themselves. Thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear, not be afraid of evil tidings, thy heart being fixed, Psal. cxlii. 7. Job was now full of confusion, (chap. x. 15.) while he looked upon God as his enemy, and quarrelled with him; but, Zophar assures him, if he would submit and humble himself, his mind would be stayed, and he would be freed from those frightful apprehensions he had of God, which put him into such a toss. The less we are frightened the more we are fixed, and, consequently, the more fit we are for our services and for our sufferings.

3. A comfortable reflection upon their past troubles, ver. 16. Thou shalt forget thy misery; (as the mother forgets her travelling pains for joy that the child is born;) thou shalt be perfectly freed from the impressions it makes upon thee, and thou shalt remember it as waters that pass away or are poured out of a vessel, which leave no taste or tincture behind them as other liquors do. The wounds of thy present affliction shall be perfectly healed, not only without a remaining fear, but without a remaining pain. Job had endeavoured to forget his complaint, chap. ix. 27. but found he could not, his soul had still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall: but here Zophar puts him in a way to forget it; let him by faith and prayer bring his griefs and cares to God, and leave them with him, and then he should forget them. What sin sits heavy, affliction sits light: If we duly remember our sins, we shall, in comparison with them, forget our misery; much more if we obtain the comfort of a sealed pardon, and a sealed peace: he whose iniquity is forgiven shall not say, I am sick, but forget that, Isa. xxxiii. 24.

4. A comfortable prospect of their future peace. This Zophar here thinks to please Job with, in answer to the many despairing expressions he had used, as if it were to no purpose for him to hope ever to see good days again in this world; yea, but thou mayest (saith Zophar) and good nights too.

A blessed change he here puts him in hopes of.

1. That, though now his light was eclipsed, it should shine out again, and brighter than ever, ver. 17. That even his setting sun should outshine his noon-day sun, and his evening be fair and clear as the morning, in respect both of honour and pleasure; that his light should shine out of obscurity, Isa. lviii. 10. and the thick and dark cloud, from behind which his sun should break forth, would serve as a foil to its lustre. That it should shine even in old age, and those evil days should be good days to him. Note, They that truly turn to God then begin to shine forth; and their path is as the shining light, which increaseth, and the period of their day will be the perfection of it; and their evening in this world their morning to a better.

2. That, though now he was in a continual fear and terror, he should live in a holy rest and security, and find himself continually safe and easy, ver. 18. Thou shalt be secure, because there is hope. Note, Those who have a good hope through grace in God, and of heaven, are certainly safe, and have reason to be secure, how difficult soever the times are through which they pass in this world. He that walks uprightly, may thus walk surely, because, though there be trouble and danger, yet there is hope that all will be well at last. Hope is an anchor of the soul, Heb. vi. 19. Thou shalt dig about thee, i. e. thou shalt be as safe as an army in its entrenchments. They that submit themselves to God's government shall be taken under his protection, and then they are safe both day and night. (1.) By day, when they employ themselves abroad; thou shalt dig in safety, thou and thy servants for thee, and not be again set upon by the rapinees, who fell upon his servants at plough, chap. i. 14. It is no part of the promised prosperity that he should live in idleness, but that he should have a calling and follow it, and, when he was about the business of it, should be under the divine protection; thou shalt dig and be safe, not rob and be safe, reveal and be safe: the way of duty is the way of safety. (2.) By night, when they repose themselves at home; Thou shalt take thy rest (and the sleep of the labouring man is sweet) in safety, notwithstanding the dangers of the darkness. The pillar of cloud by day shall be a pillar of fire by night: thou shalt lie down (ver. 19.) not be forced to wander where there is no place to lay thy head on, not forced to watch and sit up in expectation of assaults; but thou shalt go to bed at bed-time, and not only none shall hurt thee, but none shall make thee afraid or so much as give thee an alarm. Note, It is a great mercy to have quiet nights and undisturbed sleeps; those say so that are within the hearing of the noise of war: and the way to be quit is to seek unto God, and keep ourselves in his love. Nothing needs make those afraid who return to God as their rest, and take him for their habitation.

3. That, though now he was slighted, yet he should be courted; many shall make suit to thee, and think it their interest to secure thy friendship. Suit is made to those that are eminently wise, or reputed to be so, that are very rich or in power. Zophar knew Job so well, that he foresaw, how low soever this present ebb was, if once the tide turned, it would flow as high as ever, and he would be again the darling of his country. They that rightly make suit to God, perhaps the day may come, that others will make suit to them, as the foolish virgins to the wise, Give us of your oil.

Lastly, Zophar concludes with a brief account of the doom of wicked people, ver. 20. But the eyes of the wicked shall fail. It should seem, he suspected that Job would not take his counsel, and here tells him what would then come of it, setting death as well as life before him. See what will come of those who persist in their wickedness, and will not be reformed.

(1.) They shall not reach the good, they flatter themselves with the hopes of, in this world and in the other. Disappointments will be their doom, their shame, their endless torment. Their eyes shall fail with expecting that which will never come; when a wicked man dieth, his expectation perisheth, Prov. xi. 7. Their hope shall be as a puff of breath, (Marg.) vanished and gone, past recall: or their hope will perish and expire as a man doth when he gives up the ghost; it will, fail them when they have most need of it; and, when they expected the accomplishment of it, it will die away, and leave them in utter confusion.

(2.) They shall not avoid the evil which sometimes they frighten themselves with the apprehensions of; they shall not escape the execution of the sentence past upon them, can neither out-brave it, nor out-run it. Those that will not fly to God will find it in vain to think of flying from him.

## C H A P. XII.

In this, and the two following chapters, we have Job's answer to Zophar's discourse. In which, as before, he first reasons with his friends. See chap. xiii. 19. and then turns to his God, and directs his expostulations to him thence to the end of his discourse. In this chapter he addresseth himself to his friends, and, (1.) He condemns what they had said of him, and the judgment they had given of his character, ver. 1—5. (2.) He contradicts and confronts what they had said of the destruction of wicked people in this world, shewing that they often prosper, ver. 6—11. (3.) He consents to what they had said of the wisdom, and power, and sovereignty of God, and the dominion of his providence over the children of men and all their affairs: confirms this, and enlargeth upon it, ver. 12—25.

1. **A**ND Job answered and said, 2. No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you! 3. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these? 4. I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answered him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn. 5. He, that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.

The reproofs Job here gives to his friends, whether they were just or not, were very sharp, and may serve for a rebuke to all that are proud and scornful, and an exposing of their folly.

1. He upbraids them with their conceitedness of themselves, and the mighty good opinion they seemed to have of their own wisdom in comparison with him; than which nothing is more weak and unbecoming, nor better deserves to be ridiculed, as it is here.

(1.) He represents them as claiming the monopoly of wisdom, ver. 2. He speaks ironically, No doubt but ye are the people, you think yourselves fit to dictate and give law to all mankind, and your own judgment the standard by which every man's opinion must be measured and tried; as if nobody could discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, but you only; and therefore every top-sail must lower to you, and, right or wrong, we must all lay as you say, and you three must be the people, the majority, to have the casting vote. Note, It is a very foolish and sinful thing for any to think themselves wiser than all mankind beside, or to speak and act confidently and imperiously, as if they thought so. Yea, he goes farther; you not only think there is none, but that there will be none, as wise as you, and therefore wisdom must die with you, and all the world must be fools when you are gone, and in the dark when your sun is set. Note, It is folly for us to think that there will be any great irreparable loss of us when we are gone, or that we can be ill-spared, since God has the residue of the spirit, and can raise up others, more fit than we are, to do his work. When wise men and good men die, it is comfort to think that wisdom and goodness shall not die with them. Some think Job here reflects upon Zophar's comparing him as he thought) and others, to the wisdom of the colt, chap. xi. 12. Yes, saith he, we must be asses, you are the only men.

(2.) He doth himself the justice to put in his claim as a sharer in the gifts of wisdom, ver. 3. But I have understanding, a heart as well as ye; nay, I fall not lower than you, as it is in the margin; I am as well able to judge of the methods and meanings of the divine providence, and to construe the hard chapters of it, as you are. He saith not this to magnify himself; it was no great applause of himself to say, I have understanding as well as you; no, nor to say, I understand and this matter as well as you; for what reason had either he or they to be proud of understanding that which was obvious and level to the capacity of the meanest; yea, who knows not such things as these? What things you have said, that are true and plain truths and common themes, which there are many that can talk as handsomely of as either you or I; but he saith it to humble them, a id check the value they had for themselves as doctors of the chair. Note, (1.) It may justly keep us from being proud of our knowledge, to consider how many there are that know as much as we do, and perhaps much more, and to better purpose. (2.) When we are tempted to be harsh in our censures of those we differ from and dispute with, we ought to consider that they also have understanding as well as we, a capacity of judging, and a right of judging for themselves; nay, perhaps they are not inferior to us, but superior, and it is possible they may be in the right and we in the wrong, and therefore we ought not to judge or despise them, Rom. xiv. 3. nor pretend to be masters, Jam. iii. 1. whilst all we are brethren, Mat. xxiii. 8. It is a very reasonable allowance to be made, to all we converse with, all we contend with, that they are rational creatures as well as we.

2. He complains of the great contempt with which they had treated him. Those that are haughty and think too well of themselves are commonly scornful, and ready to trample upon all about them: Job found it so, at least he thought he did, ver. 4. I am as one mocked. I cannot say there was cause for this charge; we will not think Job's friends designed him any abuse, nor aimed at any thing but to convince him, and so in the right method to comfort him; yet he cries out, I am as one mocked. Note, We are apt to call reproofs reproaches, and to think ourselves mocked when we are but advised and admonished; and this peevishness is our folly, and a great wrong to ourselves and to our friends. Yet we cannot but say there was colour for this charge; they came to comfort him, but they vexed him; gave him counsels and encouragements, but with no great opinion that either the one or the other would take place; and therefore he thought they mocked him, and it added much to his grief. Nothing more grievous to those, that are fallen from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity, than to be trodden on and insulted over when they are down, and it is what they are too apt to be jealous of.

Observe, 1. What aggravated his grievance to him. Two things, (1.) That they were his neighbours, his friends, his companions; so the word signifies, and the scoffs of such are often most spitefully given, and always most heinously taken, Psal. lv. 12, 13. It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I would have slighted it, and so borne it; but it was thou, a man, mine equal. (2.) That they were professors of religion, such as called upon God, and said that he answered them; (for some understand that of the persons mocking;) they are such as have a regard to heaven, and an interest in heaven, whose prayers I would therefore be glad of and thankful for, and whose good opinion I cannot but covet, and therefore whose censures are the more grievous. Note, It is sad that any who call upon God should mock their brethren, Jam. iii. 9, 10. and cannot but lie heavy on a good man to be thought ill of by those whom he thinks well of; yet this is no new thing.

2. What



2. What supported him under it. (1.) That he had a God to go to, to whom he could lodge his appeal; for some understand those words of the person mocked, that he *callesth upon God, and he answereth him*, and so it agrees with chap. xvi. 20. *My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears to God.* If our friends be deaf to our complaints, God is not; if they condemn us, God knows our integrity; if they make the worst of us, he will make the best of us; if they give us cross answers, he will give us kind ones. (2.) That his cause was not singular, but very common; *the just upright man is laughed to scorn*; by many he is laughed at even for his justice and his uprightness, his honesty towards men, and his piety towards God; these are derided as foolish things, which silly people needlessly hamper themselves with; as if religion were a jest, and therefore to be made a jest of. By most he is laughed at for any little infirmity or weakness, notwithstanding his justice and uprightness, without any consideration had of that which is so much his honour. Note, It was of old the lot of honest good people, to be despised and derided, we are not therefore to think it strange, (1 Pet. xiv. 12.) no nor think it hard if it be our lot; so persecuted they not only the prophets, but even the saints of the patriarchal age, Matt. v. 12. And can we expect to fare better than they?

3. What he suspected to be the true cause of it, and that was in short this: they were themselves rich and at ease, and therefore they despised him who was fallen into poverty. It is the way of the world; we see instances of it daily; they that prosper are praised, but they that are going down, down with them: *he that is ready to slip with his feet*, and fall into trouble, though he had formerly shone as a lamp, is then looked upon as a lamp going out, like the snuff of the candle which we throw to the ground and tread upon, and is accordingly *despised in the thought of him that is at ease*, ver. 5. Even the just upright man, that is in his generation as a burning and shining light, if he enter into temptation, (Psal. lxxiii. 2.) or come under a cloud, is looked upon with contempt. See here, (1.) What is the common fault of those that live in prosperity, being full, and easy, and merry, themselves, they look scornfully upon those that are in want, pain, and sorrow; they overlook them, take no notice of them, and study to forget them. See Psal. cxxiii. 4. The chief butler drinks wine in bowls, but makes nothing of the afflictions of Joseph. Wealth without grace often makes men thus haughty, thus careless of their poor neighbours. (2.) What is the common fate of those that fall into adversity? Poverty serves to eclipse all their lustre; though they are lamps, yet if taken out of golden candlesticks, and put, like Gideon's, into earthen pitchers, nobody values them as formerly, but they that live at ease despise them.

6. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. 7. But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee: and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: 8. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. 9. Who knoweth not, in all these, that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this? 10. In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind; 11. Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat.

Job's friends, all of them, went upon this principle, that wicked people cannot prosper long in this world, but some remarkable judgment or other will suddenly light on them: Zophar had concluded with it, that *the eyes of the wicked shall fail*, chap. xi. 20. This principle Job here opposeth, and maintains, that God, in disposing men's outward affairs, acts as a sovereign, reserving the exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state.

1. He asserts it as an undoubted truth, that wicked people may, and often do, prosper long in this world, ver. 6. Even great sinners may enjoy great prosperity. Observe, (1.) How he describes the sinners; they are robbers, and such as provoke God; the worst kind of sinners, blasphemers and persecutors: perhaps he refers to the Sabeans and Chaldeans, who had robbed him, and had always lived by spoil and rapine, and yet they prospered, all the world saw they did; and there is no disputing against sense: one observation built upon matter of fact is worth twenty notions framed by an hypothesis. Or, more generally, all proud oppressors are robbers and pirates; it is supposed that what is injurious to men is provoking to God, the patron of right and protector of mankind. It is not strange, if those that violate the bonds of justice, break through the obligations of all religion, bid defiance even to God himself, and make nothing of provoking him. (2.) How he describes their prosperity: it is very great; for, (1.) Even their tabernacles prosper, those that live with them, and those that come after them, and descend from them. It seems as if a blessing were entailed upon their families, and that is preserved sometimes to succeeding generations which was got by fraud. (2.) They are secure, and not only fear no hurt, but feel none; nor are under any apprehensions of danger, either from threatening providences, or an awakened conscience. But those that provoke God are never the more safe for their being secure. (3.) *Into their hand God brings abundantly*: They have more than heart could wish, Psal. lxxiii. 7. Not for necessity only, but for delight; not for themselves only, but for others; not for the present only, but for hereafter: and this from the hand of providence too. God brings plentifully to them: we cannot therefore judge of men's piety by their plenty, nor of what they have in their heart by what they have in their hand.

2. He appeals even to the inferior creatures for the proof of this, the beasts, and fowls, and trees, and even the earth itself; consult these, and they shall tell thee, ver. 7, 8. many a good lesson we may learn from them, but what are they here to teach us?

(1.) We may from them learn that the tabernacles of robbers prosper: so some. For, (1.) Even among the brute creatures the greater devour the less, and the stronger prey upon the weaker, and men are as the fishes of the sea, Hab. i. 14. If sin had not entered, we may suppose there had been no such disorder among the creatures, but the wolf and the lamb had lain down together. (2.) These creatures are servicable to wicked men, and so they declare their prosperity: ask the herds and the flocks to whom they belong, and they will tell you, such a robber, such an oppressor, is their owner: the fishes and fowls will tell you, they are served up to the tables, and feed the luxury of proud sinners: the earth brings forth her fruits to them, chap. ix. 24. and the whole creation groans under the burden of their tyranny, Rom. viii. 20—22. Note, All the creatures which wicked men abuse, by making them the food and fuel of their lusts, will witness against them another day, James v. 3, 4.

(2.) We may from them learn the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, and that sovereign dominion of his; into which plain and self-evident truth

all these difficult dispensations must be resolved, Zophar had made a mighty mystery of it, chap. xi. 7. So far from that (saith Job,) that, so much as we are concerned to know, we may learn even from the inferior creatures; for who knows not from all these? any one may easily gather from the book of the creatures that *the hand of the Lord hath wrought this*, ver. 9. i. e. that there is a wise providence which guides and governs all these things by rules which we neither are acquainted with nor are competent judges of. Note, From God's sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, we should learn to acquiesce in all his disposals of the affairs of the children of men, though contrary to our measures.

3. He resolves all into the absolute propriety which God has in all the creatures, ver. 10. *In whose hand is the soul of every living thing.* All the creatures, and mankind particularly, derive their being from him, owe their being to him, depend upon him for their support of it, lie at his mercy, are under his direction and dominion, and entirely at his dispose, and at his summons must resign their lives. All souls are his; and may he not do what he will with his own? The name *Jehovah* is used here, ver. 9. and it is the only time that we meet it in all the discourses between Job and his friends, for God was in that age more known by the name of *Shaddai, the Almighty*.

Those words, ver. 11. *doth not the ear try words as the mouth tastes meat?* may be taken either as the conclusion of the foregoing discourse, or the preface to what follows. The mind of man has a good faculty of discerning between truth and error, when duly stated, as the palate has of discerning between what is sweet and what is bitter: he therefore demands from his friends a liberty to judge for himself of what they had said, and desires them to use the same liberty in judging of what he had said; nay, he seems to appeal to any man's impartial judgment in this controversy: let the ear try the words on both sides, and it would be found he was in the right. Note, The ear must try words before it receives them so as to subscribe to them. As by the taste we judge what food is wholesome to the body, and what not, so, by the spirit of discerning, we must judge what doctrine is sound, and favourable, and wholesome, and what not, 1 Cor. x. 15—xi. 13.

12. With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding. 13. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. 14. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. 15. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. 16. With him is strength, and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. 17. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. 18. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. 19. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. 20. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. 21. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. 22. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death. 23. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. 24. He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. 25. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

This is a noble discourse of Job's concerning the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God, in ordering and disposing of all the affairs of the children of men, according to the counsel of his own will, which none dares to gainsay or can resist. Take both him and them out of the controversy in which they were so warmly engaged, and they all spake admirably well: but in that sometimes, we scarce know what to make of them. It were well if wise and good men, that differ in their apprehensions about less things, would see it to be for their honour and comfort; and the edification of others, to dwell most upon those great things in which they are agreed. On this subject Job speaks like himself; here are no passionate complaints, no peevish reflections, but every thing masculine and great.

1. He asserts the unsearchable wisdom and irresistible power of God. It is allowed that among men there is wisdom, and understanding, ver. 12. But it is to be found only with some few, with the ancient and those that are blessed with length of days, who get it by long experience and constant experience; and when they have got the wisdom, they have lost the strength, and are unable to execute the results of their wisdom: but now with God there are both wisdom and strength, wisdom to design the best, and strength to accomplish what is designed: he doth not get counsel and understanding as we do, by observation, but he hath it essentially and eternally in himself, ver. 13. What is the wisdom of ancient men compared with the wisdom of the Ancient of days! it is but little that we know, and less that we can do; but God can do every thing, and *no thought can be withholden from him*. Happy they that have this God for their God, for they have infinite wisdom and strength engaged for them! Foolish and fruitless are all the attempts of men against him, ver. 14. *He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again*. Note, There is no contending with the divine providence, nor breaking the measures of it. As he had said before, chap. ix. 12. *He takes away, and who can hinder him?* so saith he again; what God saith cannot be gained, nor what he doth undone: there is no rebuilding what God will have to lie in ruins; witness the tower of Babel, which the undertakers could not go on with; and the desolations of Sodom and Gomorrah, which could never be repaired. See Isa. xxv. 2. Ezek. xxvi. 14. Rev. xviii. 21. There is no releasing those whom God has condemned to a perpetual imprisonment; if he shut up a man by sickness, reduce him to straits, and embarrass him in his affairs, there can be no opening. He shuts up in the grave, and none can break open those sealed doors; shuts up in hell, in chains of darkness, and none can pass that great gulph fixed.

He gives an instance for the proof of it in nature, ver. 15. And has the command of the waters, binds them as in a garment, Prov. xxx. 4. holds them in the hollow of his hand, Isa. xl. 12. and he can punish the children of men either by the defect or by the excess of them, as men break the jaws of virtue by extremes on each hand, both defects and excesses; while the virtue



virtue is in the mean, so God corrects them by extremes, and denies them the mercy which is in the mean. (1.) Great droughts are sometimes great judgments; he *withholdeth the waters, and they dry up*; if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron; if the rain be denied, fountains dry up and their streams are wanted: fields are parched and their fruits are wanted, *Amos iv. 7.* (2.) Great wet is sometimes a great judgment, *raileth the waters, and overturns the earth, the products of it, the buildings upon it.* A sweeping rain is said to *leave no food*, *Prov. xxviii.* See how many ways God has of contending with a sinful people, and taking from them abused forfeited mercies, and how utterly unable we are to contend with him. If we might invert the order, this verse would fitly refer to Noah's flood, that ever memorable instance of the divine power: God then in wrath sent the waters out, and they overturned the earth, but in mercy he withheld them, shut the windows of heaven and the fountains of the great deep, and then in a little time they dried up.

3. He gives many instances of it in God's powerful management of the children of men, crossing their purposes, and serving his own by them and upon them, overruling all their counsels, over-powering all their attempts, and overcoming all their oppositions. What changes doth God make with men, what turns doth he give them, how easily, how surprisingly!

In general, *ver. 16. with him is strength and reason*, so some translate it; strength and consistency with himself: it is an elegant word in the original; with him is the very quintessence and extract of wisdom. With him is power, and all that is, so some read it: He is what he is himself, and by him and in him all things subsist. Having this strength and wisdom he knows how to make use of, not only of those that are wise and good, who willingly and designedly serve him, but even of those that are foolish and bad, that one would think could be made no way serviceable to the designs of his providence: *the deceived and the deceiver are his*: the simplest men, that are deceived, are not below his notice, the subtlest men, that do deceive, cannot with all their subtlety escape his cognizance. The world is full of deceit; the one half of mankind cheats the other, and God suffers it; and from both will at last bring glory to himself. The deceivers make tools of the deceived, but the great God makes tools of them both, wherewith he works, and none can let him. He has wisdom and might enough to manage all the fools and knaves in the world, and knows how to serve his own purposes by them, notwithstanding the weakness of the one and the wickedness of the other. When Jacob by a fraud got the blessing, the design of God's grace was served. When Ahab was drawn by a false prophecy into an expedition that was his ruin, the design of God's justice was served, and in both *the deceived and the deceiver* were at his dispose. See *Ezek. xiv. 9.* God would not suffer the sin of the deceiver, nor the misery of the deceived, if he knew not how to set bounds to both, and bring glory to himself out of both. *Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent* thus reigns; and it is well he doth, for, otherwise, there is so little wisdom, and so little honesty in the world, that it had all been in confusion and ruin long ago.

He next descends to the particular instances of the wisdom and power of God in the revolutions of states and kingdoms: for thence he fetcheth his proofs, rather than from the like operations of providence concerning private persons and families; because the more high and public the station is in which men are placed, the more the changes that are concerning them are taken notice of; and, consequently, the more illustriously doth providence shine forth in them; and it is easy to argue, if God can thus turn and toss the great ones of the earth, like a ball in a large place, (as the prophet speaks, *Isa. xlii. 18.*) much more the little ones; and with him, to whom states and kingdoms must truckle, it is sure the greatest madnels for us to contend. Some think Job here refers to the extirpation of those powerful nations, the Rephaim, the Zurim, the Emim, and the Horites, which is mentioned, *Gen. xiv. 5, 6. Deut. ii. 20—25.* in which, perhaps, it was particularly taken notice how strangely they were infatuated and enfeebled; but, if so, it is designed to shew, that, whenever the like is done, in the affairs of nations, it is God that doth it, and we must therein observe his sovereign dominion, even over those that think themselves most powerful, politic, and absolute. Compare this with that of Eliphaz, *chap. v. 12, &c.*

Let us gather up the particular changes here instanced in, which God makes upon persons, either for the destruction of nations, and the planting of others in their room, or for the turning out of a particular government and ministry, and the elevation of another in its room, which may be a blessing to the kingdom; witness the glorious Revolution in our own land twenty years ago, in which we saw as happy an exposition as ever was given of this discourse of Job.

1. Those that are wise are sometimes strangely infatuated, and in that the hand of God must be acknowledged, *ver. 17. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled*, as trophies of his victory over them; spoiled of all the honour and wealth they have got by their policy, nay, spoiled of the wisdom itself for which they had been celebrated, and the success they promised themselves in their project: his counsel stands, while all their devices are brought to nought, and their designs baffled, and so they are spoiled both of the satisfaction and of the reputation of their wisdom. *He maketh the judges fools*: by a work on their minds he deprives them of their qualifications for business, and so they become really fools; and, by a disposal of their affairs, he makes the issue and event of their projects to be quite contrary to what they themselves intended, and so he makes them look like fools. Abithophel, one in whom this Scripture was remarkably fulfilled: his counsel became foolishness, and he, according to his name, *the brother of a fool.* See *Isa. xix. 13.* *The princes of Zoan are become fools, they have seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof.* Let not the wise man therefore glory in his wisdom, nor the ablest counsellors and judges be proud of their station, but humbly depend upon God for the continuance of their abilities. Even the aged, who seem to hold their wisdom by prescription, and think they have got it by their own industry, and therefore have an indefeasible title to it, may yet be deprived of it; and often are by the infirmities of age, which make them twice children; he *taketh away the understanding of the aged*, *ver. 20.* The aged, that were most depended on for advice, fail those that depended on them. We read of an old and yet foolish king, *Ezek. iv. 13.*

2. Those that were high and in authority are strangely brought down, impoverished, and enslaved, and it is God that humbles them, *ver. 18. He looseth the bond of kings*, and taketh from them the power wherewith they ruled their subjects; perhaps enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour; strips them of all the ensigns of their honour and authority, and all the supports of their tyranny; unbuckles their belts, so that the sword drops from their side, and then no marvel if the crown quickly drops from their heads; on which presently follows the girding of their loins with a girdle, a badge of servitude, for servants went with their loins girt. Thus he leads great princes away spoiled of all their power and wealth, and that in which they pleased and prided themselves, *ver. 19.* Note, Kings are not exempt from God's jurisdiction: to us they are gods, but men to him, and subject to more than the common changes of human life.

3. Those that were strong are strangely weakened, and it is God that

weakens them, *ver. 21. and overthroweth the mighty*, *ver. 19.* Strong bodies are weakened by age and sickness; powerful armies moulder and come to nothing, and their strength will not secure them from a fatal overthrow. No force can stand before Omnipotence, no not that of Goliath.

4. Those that were famed for eloquence, and intrusted with public business, are strangely silenced, and have nothing to say, *ver. 20. He removeth away the speech of the trusty*, so that they cannot speak as they intended, and as they used to do with freedom and cleanness, but blunder and falter, and make nothing of it. Or they cannot speak what they intended, but the contrary, as Balaam, who blessed those whom he was called to curse. Let not the orator therefore be proud of his rhetoric, nor use it to any ill purposes, lest God take it away, who made man's mouth.

5. Those that were honoured and admired strangely fall into disgrace; he *pourth contempt upon princes*, *ver. 21.* He leaves them to themselves to do mean things, or alters the opinions of men concerning them. If princes themselves dishonour God and despise him; if they do indignities to the people of God and trample upon them; they shall be lightly esteemed, and God will pour contempt upon them. See *Psal. ciii. 40.* Commonly none more abject in themselves, nor more abused by others, when they are down, than those that were haughty and insolent when they were in power.

6. That which was secret and lay hid is strangely brought to light, and laid open, *ver. 22. He discovers deep things out of darkness.* Secrets, closely laid, are discovered and defeated; wickedness, closely committed and artfully concealed, is discovered, and the guilty brought to condign punishment; secret treasons, (*Eccles. x. 20.*) secret murders, secret whoredoms. The cabinet counsels of princes are before God's eye, *2 King vi. 11.*

7. Kingdoms have their ebblings and flowings, their waxings and waning; and both are from God, *ver. 22. He sometimes increaseth their numbers*, and enlargeth their bounds; so that they make a great name among the nations, and become formidable; but, after a while, he sometimes discerned cause, perhaps they are destroyed and diminished, *ver. 23.* and poor, cut short and many of them cut off, and so they are made despisable among their neighbours; and they that were the head are made the tail of the nations. See *Psal. ciii. 38, 39.*

8. They that were bold and courageous, and made nothing of dangers, are strangely cowed and dispirited; and this also is the Lord's doing. *He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people*, (*ver. 24.*) that were their leaders and commanders, and were most famed for their martial fire and great achievements; when any thing was to be done they were heartless, and ready to flee at the flaking of a leaf. *Psal. lxxvi. 5.*

9. They that were driving on their projects with full speed are strangely bewildered and at a loss; they know not what they are nor what they do; are unsteady in their counsels and uncertain in their motions; off and on, this way and that way; wander like men in a desert, *ver. 24. grope like men in the dark*, and stagger like men in drink, *ver. 25. Isai. lix. 10.* Note, God can soon non plus the deepest politicians, and bring the greatest wits to their wit's end, to shew that wherein they deal proudly he is above them.

Thus are the revolutions of kingdoms wonderfully brought about by an overruling providence. Heaven and earth are shaken, but the Lord sits King for ever, and with him we look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

## C H A P. XIII.

Job here comes to make application of what he had said in the foregoing chapter, and now we have him not in so good a temper as he was in then: For, (1.) *He is very bold with his friends, comparing himself with them, notwithstanding the mortifications he was under*, *ver. 1, 2. Condemning them for their falsehood, their forwardness to judge, their partiality and deceitfulness, under colour of praising God's cause*, *ver. 3—8. and threatening them with the judgments of God for their so doing*, *ver. 9—12. desiring them to be silent*, *ver. 13, 15, 17. and turning from them to God*, *ver. 3.* (2.) *He is very bold with his God.* (1.) *In some expressions his faith is very bold, yet that is not more bold than welcome*, *ver. 15, 16, 18.* But, (2.) *In other expressions his passion is rather too bold, in expostulations with God concerning the deplorable condition he was in*, *ver. 14, 19, &c. complaining of the confusion he was in*, *ver. 20—22. and the loss he was at to find out the sin that provoked God thus to afflict him*; and, in short, *of the rigour of God's proceedings against him*, *ver. 23, 28.*

1. **L**O, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it. 2. What ye know, the same do I know also: I am not inferior unto you. 3. Surely I would speak to the Almighty; and I desire to reason with God. 4. But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. 5. O that you would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom! 6. Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips. 7. Will you speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him? 8. Will ye accept his person? will ye contend for God? 9. Is it good that he should search you out? or, as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him? 10. He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons. 11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you? 12. Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay.

Job here warmly expresseth his resentments of the unkindness of his friends to him.

1. He comes up with them as one that understood the matter of dispute as well as they, and did not need to be taught by them, *ver. 1, 2.* They compelled him, as the Corinthians did Paul, to commend himself and his own knowledge, yet not in a way of self-applause but of self-justification. All he had said before, his eye had seen confirmed by many instances, and his ear had heard seconded by many authorities, and he well understood it, and what use to make of it. Happy they that do not only see and hear, but understand, the greatness and glory, and sovereignty of God. And this he thought would justify what he had said before, *chap. xii. 3.* which he repeats here, *ver. 2. What ye know, the same do I know also*; so that I need not come to you to be taught; I am not inferior unto you in wisdom. Note, Those that enter into disputation, enter into temptation to magnify themselves, and villify their brethren more than is fit, and therefore ought to watch and pray against the workings of pride.



2. He turns from them to God, *ver. 3. Surely I would speak to the Almighty, if I might have liberty to reason with God!* He would not be so hard upon me as you are. The prince himself will perhaps give audience to a poor petitioner with more mildness, and patience, and condescension, than the servants will. Job would rather argue with God himself than with his friends. See here, (1.) What confidence they have towards God, whose hearts condemn them not of reigning hypocrisy; they can with humble boldness appear before him and appeal to him. (2.) What comfort they have in God, whose neighbours unjustly condemn them: If they may not speak to them with any hopes of a fair hearing, yet they may speak to the Almighty, they have easy access to him, and shall find acceptance with him.

3. He condemns them for their unjust and uncharitable usage of him, *ver. 4. (1.) They falsely accused him, and that was unjust; ye are forgers of lies.* They framed a wrong hypothesis concerning the divine providence, and belyed that, as if that did never remarkably afflict any but wicked men in this world; and thence they drew a false judgment concerning Job, that he was certainly a hypocrite. For this gross mistake both in doctrine and application, he thinks an indictment of forgery lies against them. To speak lies is bad enough, though but at second hand, but to forge them with contrivance and deliberation is much worse: yet against this wrong neither innocency nor excellency will be a fence. (2.) They basely deceived him, and that was unkind; they undertook his cure, and pretended to be his physicians, but they were all physicians of no value; idol-physicians, that can do me no more good than an idol can: they were worthless physicians, who neither understood his case, nor knew how to prescribe to him; mere quacks, that pretended to mighty things, but in conference added nothing to him; he was never the wiser for all they said. Thus, to broken hearts and wounded consciences, all creatures without Christ are physicians of no value, on which one may spend all and be never the better, but rather grow worse, *Mark v. 26.*

4. He begs they would be silent and give him a patient hearing, *ver. 5, 6. (1.) He thinks it would be a credit to themselves if they would say no more, having said too much already. Hold your peace, and it shall be your wisdom,* for thereby you will conceal your ignorance and ill-nature, which now appear in all you say. They pleaded, they could not forbear speaking, *chap. iv. 2.—xi. 2, 3.* but he tells them they had more consulted their own reputation if they had enjoined themselves silence. Better say nothing than nothing to the purpose, or say that which tends to the dishonour of God and the grief of our brethren. *Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace is counted wise,* because nothing appears to the contrary, *Prov. xvii. 28.* And, as silence is an evidence of wisdom, so it is a means of it, as it gives time to think and hear. (2.) He thinks it would be a piece of justice to him to hear what he had to say. *Hear now my reasoning.* Perhaps, though they did not interrupt him in his discourse, yet they seemed careless, and did not much heed what he said, he therefore begs they would not only hear but hearken. Note, We should be very willing and glad to hear what those have to say for themselves, whom, upon any account, we are in temptation to have hard thoughts of. Many a man, if he could but be fairly heard, would be fairly acquitted, even in the consciences of those that run him down.

5. He endeavours to convince them of the wrong they did to God's honour, while they pretended to plead for him, *ver. 7, 8.* They valued themselves upon it that they spoke for God, were advocates for him, and had undertaken to justify him and his proceedings against Job. And being (as they thought) of counsel for the Sovereign, they expected not only the ear of the court, and the last word, but judgment on their side: but Job tells them plainly, (1.) That God and his cause did not need such advocates; will ye think to contend for God? as if his justice were clouded and wanted to be cleared up, or as if he were at a loss what to say, and wanted you to speak for him. Will you, that are so weak and passionate, put in for the honour of pleading God's cause? Good work ought not to be put into bad hands. *Will you accept his person?* Those that have not right on their side, if they carry their cause, it is by the partiality of the judge in favour of their persons; but God's cause is so just, that it needs no such methods for the support of it. He is a God, and can plead for himself, (*Judges vi. 31.*) and, if you were for ever silent, the heavens would declare his righteousness. (2.) That God's cause suffered by such management. Under pretence of justifying God in afflicting Job, they magisterially condemn him as a hypocrite and an ill man; this (saith he) is speaking wickedly for uncharitableness, and censoriousness, is wickedness; it is great wickedness; it is an offence to God to wrong our brethren; it is talking deceitfully; for you condemn one whom yet perhaps your own consciences at the same time cannot but acquit: your principles are false, and your arguments fallacious, and will it excuse to say it is for God? No, for a good intention will not justify, much less will it sanctify, an ill word or action. God's truth needs not our lie, nor God's cause either our sinful policies or our sinful passions: the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, nor may we do evil that good may come, *Rom. iii. 7, 8.* Pious frauds (as they call them) are impious cheats, and devout persecutions horrid profanations of the name of God; as theirs that *hated their brethren, cast them out, saying, Let the Lord be glorified,* *Isa. lxvi. 5.* *John xvi. 2.*

6. He endeavours to possess them with the fear of God's judgment, and so to bring them to a better temper. Let them not think to impose upon God as they might upon a man like themselves, nor expect to gain his countenance in their ill practices, by pretending a zeal for him and his honour: as one man mocks another by flattering him, do you think so to mock him and deceive him? No, those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove to have put a cheat upon themselves: *be not deceived, God is not mocked.*

That they might not think thus to jest with God, and affront him, he would have them to consider both God and themselves, and then they would find themselves unable to enter into judgment with him.

1. Let them consider what a God he is into whose service they had thus thrust themselves, and to whom they really did so much disservice, and enquire whether they could give him a good account of what they did.

Consider, (1.) The strictness of his scrutiny and enquiries concerning them, *ver. 9. Is it good that he should search you out?* Can you bear to have the principles looked into which you go upon in your censures, and to have the bottom or the matter found out? Note, It concerns us all seriously to consider whether it will be to our advantage or not that God searcheth the heart: it is good to an upright man who means honestly that God should search him, therefore he prays for it, *Search me, O God, and know my heart.* God's omniscience is a witness of his sincerity; but it is bad to him, that looks one way and rows another, that God should search him out and lay him open to his confusion.

2. The severity of his rebukes and the displeasure against them, *ver. 10. If ye do accept persons,* though but secretly and in heart, *he will surely reprove you:* he will be so far from being pleased with your censures of me, though it be under colour of vindicating him, that he will resent it as a great provocation, as any prince or great man would, if an ill action were done under colour of his name and advancing his interest. Note, What we do amidst we shall certainly be reproved for one way or other, one time or other, though it be done never so secretly.

(3.) The terror of his majesty, which if they would duly stand in awe of, they would not do that which would make them obnoxious to his wrath, *ver. 11. Shall not his excellency make you afraid?* You that have great knowledge of God, and profess religion and a fear of him how dare you talk at this rate, and give yourselves so great a liberty of speech? *Ought ye not to walk and talk in the fear of God?* *Nehem. v. 9. Should not his dread fall upon you,* and give check to your passions? Methinks Job speaks this as one that did himself know the terror of the Lord, and lived in a holy fear of him, whatever his friends suggested to the contrary. Note, (1.) There is in God a dreadful excellency. He is the most excellent being, has all excellencies in himself, and, in each, infinitely excels any creature. His excellencies, in themselves, are amiable and lovely: he is the most beautiful being; but, considering man's distance from God by nature, and his defection and degeneracy by sin, his excellencies are dreadful: his power, holiness, justice, yea, and his goodness too are dreadful excellencies: they shall fear the Lord and his goodness. (2.) A holy awe of this dreadful excellency should fall upon us and make us afraid. This would awaken impenitent sinners, and bring them to repentance, and would influence all to be careful to please him, and afraid of offending him.

2. Let them consider themselves, and what an unequal match they were for this great God, *ver. 12. Your remembrances, all that in you for which you hope to be remembered when you are gone, are like unto ashes, worthless and weak; and easily trampled on and blown away: Your bodies are like bodies of clay,* mouldering and coming to nothing; your memories you think will survive your bodies, but, alas! they are like ashes, which will be shovelled up with your dust. Note, The consideration of our own meanness and mortality should make us afraid of offending God, and is a good reason why we should not despise and trample upon our brethren. Bishop Patrick gives another sense of this verse; your remembrances on God's behalf are no better than dust, and the arguments you accumulate but like so many heaps of dirt.

13. Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will. 14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand? 15. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. 16. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. 17. Hear diligently my speech and my declaration with your ears. 18. Behold, now, I have ordered my cause, I know that I shall be justified. 19. Who is he that will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost. 20. Only do not two things unto me: then I will not hide myself from thee. 21. Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid. 22. Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me.

Job here takes fresh hold, fast hold on his integrity, as one that resolved not to let it go, nor suffer it to be wrested from him; his firmness in this matter is commendable, and his warmth excusable.

1. He bespeaks his friends, and all the company, to let him alone, and not interrupt him in what he was about to say, *ver. 13.* but diligently to hearken to it, *ver. 17.* He would have his own protestation to be decisive, for none but God and himself knew his heart; he was silent from me therefore, and let me hear no more of you, but do you hearken diligently to what I say, and let my own oath, for my confirmation, be an end of the strife.

2. He resolves to adhere to the testimony his own conscience gave of his integrity; and, though his friends called it obstinacy, that should not shake his constancy: I will speak in my own defence, and let come on me what will, *ver. 13.* Let my friends put what construction they please upon it, and think the worse of me for it, I hope God will not make my necessary defence to be my offence, as you do: he will justify me, *ver. 18.* and then nothing can come amiss to me. Note, Those that are upright, and have the assurance of their uprightness, may cheerfully welcome every event: come what will they are ready for it. It is *bene preparatum pedibus.* He resolves, *ver. 15.* he will maintain his own ways; he will never part with the satisfaction he had in having walked uprightly with God; but, though he could not justify every word he had spoken, yet, in the general, his ways were good, and he would maintain it; and why should he not, since that was his great support under his present exercises? as it was Hezekiah's, *Now, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee.* Nay, he would not only not betray his own cause or give it up, but he would openly avow his sincerity, for, *ver. 19.* if I hold my tongue, and not speak for myself, my silence now will for ever silence me, for I shall certainly give up the ghost, *ver. 19.* If I cannot be cleared, yet let me eased by what I say, as Elihu, *chap. xxxii. 17.*

3. He complains of the extremity of pain and misery he was in, *ver. 14. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth?* That is, (1.) Why do I suffer such agonies? I cannot but wonder that God should lay so much upon me, when he knows I am not a wicked man. He was ready not only to rent his clothes, but even to tear his flesh, through the greatness of his affliction, and saw himself at the brink of death, and his life in his hand; yet his friends could not charge him with any enormous crime, nor would he himself discover any; no marvel then he was in such confusion. (2.) Why do I strive and smother the protestations of my innocency? When a man with great difficulty keeps in what he would say, he bites his lips: now, saith he, why may not I take a liberty to speak, since I do but vex myself, add to my torment, and endanger my life, by refraining? Note, It would vex the most patient man, when he has lost every thing else, to be denied the comfort (if he deserves it) of a good conscience and a good name.

4. He comforts himself in God, and still keeps hold of his confidence in him. Observe here,

(1.) What he depends upon God for: justification and salvation are two great things we hope for through Christ. (1.) Justification, *ver. 18. I have ordered my cause,* and, upon the whole matter, *I know that I shall be justified:* This he knew, because he knew that his Redeemer lived, *chap. xix. 25.* They whose hearts are upright with God, in walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, may be sure, that through Christ, there shall be no condemnation to them; but, whoever lays any thing to their charge, they shall be justified; they may know that they shall. (2.) Salvation, *ver. 16. He also shall be my salvation:* he means it not of temporal salvation; he had little expectation of that; but, concerning his eternal salvation, he was very confident that God would not only be his Saviour to make him happy, but his salvation, in the vision and fruition of whom he should be happy. And the reason why he depended on God for salvation is, because a hypocrite



*crie shall not come before him:* He knew himself not to be a hypocrite, and that none but hypocrites are rejected of God, and therefore concluded he should not be rejected. Sincerity is our evangelical perfection: nothing will ruin us but the want of that.

(2.) With what constancy he depends upon him: *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,* ver. 15. This is a high expression of faith, and what we should all labour to come up to; to trust in God though he slay us. That is, we must be well pleased with God as a friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an enemy, *Job* xxiii. 8—10. We must believe that all shall work for good to us, even then when all seems to make against us, *Jer.* xxiv. 5. We must proceed and persevere in the way of our duty, though it costs us all that is dear to us in this world, even life itself, *Heb.* xi. 35. We must depend upon the performance of the promise, when all the ways leading to it are shut up, *Rom.* iv. 18. We must rejoice in God, when we have nothing else to rejoice in, and cleave to him; yea, though we cannot for the present find comfort in him, in a dying hour we must derive from him living comforts; and this is to trust in him though he slay us.

5. He wishes to argue the case even with God himself, if he might but have leave to settle the preliminaries of the treaty, ver. 20, 21, 22. He had desired, ver. 3. to *reason with God*, and is still of the same mind, he will not hide himself, i. e. He will not decline the trial, nor dread the issue of it, but under two provisos, (1.) That his body might not be tortured with this exquisite pain: *Withdraw thine hand from me,* for while I am in this extremity I am fit for nothing: I can make a shift to talk with my friends, but I know not how to address myself to thee. When we are to converse with God, we have need to be composed, and as free as possible from every thing that may make us uneasy. (2.) That his mind might not be terrified with the tremendous majesty of God: *let not thy dread make me afraid*; either let the manifestations of thy presence be familiar, or let me be enabled to bear them without disorder and disturbance. Moses himself trembled before God, so did Isaiah and Habakkuk: *O God, thou art terrible even in thy holy places.* Lord, saith Job, let not me be put into such a consternation of spirit, together with this bodily affliction, for then I must certainly drop the cause, and shall make nothing of it. See what a folly it is for men to put off their repentance and conversion to a sick-bed and a death-bed! How can even a good man, much less a bad man, reason with God, so as to be justified before him, when he is upon the rack of pain and under the terror of the arrests of death? At such a time it is very bad to have the great work to do, but very comfortable to have it done, as it was to Job, who, if he might have but a little breathing-time, was ready either, (1.) To hear God speaking to him by his word, and return an answer; *Call thou, and I will answer?* or, (2.) To speak to him by prayer, and expect an answer, *Let me speak, and answer thou me,* ver. 22. Compare this with chap. ix. 34, 35. where he spoke to the same purpose. In short, the badness of his case was at present such a damp upon him as he could not get over, otherwise he was well assured of the goodness of his cause, and doubted not but to have the comfort of it at last, when the present cloud was over. With such holy boldness may the upright come to the throne of grace, not doubting but to find mercy there.

23. How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? 25. Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? 26. For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. 27. Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto all my paths; thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet. 28. And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten.

Here, 1. Job enquires after his sins, and begs to have them discovered to him: he looks up to God, and asks him what was the number of them, *How many are mine iniquities?* and what the particulars of them? *Make me to know my transgressions,* ver. 23. His friends were ready enough to tell him how numerous and how heinous they were, chap. xxii. 5. But, Lord, saith he, let me know them from Thee, for thy judgment is according to truth; theirs is not: this may be taken either, (1.) As a passionate complaint of hard usage; that he was punished for his faults, and yet was not told what his faults were. Or, (2.) As a prudent appeal to God from the censures of his friends; he desired all his sins might be brought to light, as knowing they would then appear nothing so many, nor so mighty, as his friends suspected him to be guilty of. Or, (3.) As a pious request to the same sense with that which Elihu directed him to, chap. xxxiv. 32. *That which I see not, teach thou me.* Note, A true penitent is willing to know the worst by himself; and we should all desire to know what our transgressions are, that we may be particular in the confession of them, and in our guard against them for the future.

2. He bitterly complains of God's withdrawals from him, ver. 24. *Wherefore hidest thou thy face?* This must be meant of something more than his outward afflictions, for the loss of estate, children, health, might well consist with God's love; when that was all, he blessed the name of the Lord, but his soul was also forevored; and that is it which he here laments, (1.) That the favours of the Almighty were suspended; God hid his face as one strange to him, displeased with him, shy and regardless of him. (2.) That the terrors of the Almighty were inflicted and impressed upon him; God held him for his enemy; shot his arrows at him, chap. vi. 4. and set him as a mark, chap. vii. 20. Note, The holy God sometimes denies his favours and discovers his terrors to the best and dearest of his saints and servants in this world. This case occurs not only in the production, but sometimes in the progress, of the divine life; evidences for heaven are eclipsed, sensible communions interrupted, dread of divine wrath impressed, and the returns of comfort, for the present, despaired of, *Psal.* lxxvii. 7, 8, 9.—lxxxviii. 7, 15, 16. These are grievous burdens to a gracious soul, that values God's loving kindness as better than life, *Prov.* xviii. 14. *A wounded spirit who can bear?* Job, by asking here, Why hidest thou thy face? teacheth us, that when, at any time, we are under the frown of God's withdrawals, we are concerned to enquire into the reason of them. What is the sin for which he corrects us? and what the good he designs us? Job's sufferings were typical of the sufferings of Christ, from whom not only men hid their faces, *Isa.* liii. 3. but God hid his. Witness the darkness which surrounded him on the cross, when he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* If this were done to these green trees, what shall be done to the dry? They will for ever be forsaken.

3. He humbly pleads with God his own utter inability to stand before him, ver. 25. *Wilt thou break a leaf, pursue the dry stubble?* Lord, is it for

thine honour to trample upon one that is down already? or to crush one that neither hath, nor pretends to any power to resist thee? Note, We ought to have such an apprehension of the goodness and compassion of God, as to believe that he will not break the bruised reed, *Matt.* xii. 20.

4. He sadly complains of God's severe dealings with him: he owns it was for his sins that God thus contended with him, but thinks it hard,

(1.) That his former sins, long since committed, should now be remembered against him, and he should be reckoned with for the old score, ver. 26. *Thou writest bitter things against me.* Afflictions are bitter things; writing of them notes deliberation and determination, written as a warrant for execution: it notes also the continuance of his affliction; for that which is written remains, and herein thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth, i. e. thou punishest me for them, and thereby puttest me in mind of them, and oblige me to renew my repentance for them. Note, 1. God sometimes writes very bitter things against the best and dearest of his saints and servants, both in outward afflictions and inward disquiet; trouble in body and trouble in mind; that he may humble them and prove them, and do them good in their latter end. 2. That the sins of youth are oftentimes the smart of age, both in respect of sorrow within, *Jer.* xxxi. 18, 19. and suffering without, *Job* xx. 11. Time doth not wear out the guilt of sin. 3. That when God writes bitter things against us, his design therein is to make us possess our iniquities; to bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them as to break us off from them. This is all the fruit to take away our sin.

(2.) That his present mistakes and miscarriages should be so strictly taken notice of, and so severely and unadverted upon, ver. 27. *Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks,* not only to afflict me, and expose me to shame, nor only to keep me from outrunning the strokes of thy wrath, but that thou mayest critically remark all my motions, and look narrowly to all my paths, to correct me for every false step; nay, for but a look awry, or a word misapplied; nay, thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet, scorest down every thing I do amiss, to reckon for it; or no sooner have I trod wrong, though never so little, but immediately I smart for it; the punishment treads upon the very heels of the sin. Guilt, both of the oldest and of the freshest date, is put together to make up the cause of my calamity. Now, (1.) It was not true that God did thus seek advantages against him; he is not thus extreme to mark what we do amiss; if he were, there were no abiding for us, *Psal.* cxxx. 3. But he is so far from this, that he deals not with us according to the desert, no not of our manifest sins, which are not found by secret search, *Jer.* ii. 34. This therefore was the language of Job's melancholy; his sober thoughts never represented God thus as a hard master. (2.) But we should keep such a strict and jealous eye as this upon ourselves and our own steps, both for the discovery of sin past, and the prevention of it for the future. It is good for us all to ponder the path of our feet.

5. He finds himself wasting away apace under the heavy hand of God, ver. 28. He, that is man, as a rotten thing, the principal of whose putrefaction is in itself, consumeth, even like a moth-eaten garment, which goes ever the longer the worse. Or he, i. e. God, like rottenness, and like a moth, consumeth me. Compare this with *Hos.* v. 12. *I will be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness;* and see, *Psal.* xxxix. 11. Note, Man at the best wears fast; but under God's rebukes especially he is soon gone. While there is so little soundness in the soul, no marvel there is so little soundness in the flesh, *Psal.* xxxviii. 3.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Job had turned from speaking to his friends, finding it to no purpose to reason with them, and here goes on to speak to God and himself. He had minded his friends of their frailty and mortality, chap. xiii. 12. here he minds himself of his own, and pleads it with God for some mitigation of his miseries. We have here an account, (1.) Of man's life, that it is short, ver. 1, 2. Sorrowful, ver. 1. Sinful, ver. 4. Stinted, ver. 5—14. (2.) Of man's death, that it puts a final period to our present life, to which we shall not again return, ver. 7—12. That it hides us from the calamities of life, ver. 13. destroys the hopes of life, ver. 18, 19. Sends us away from the business of life, ver. 20. and keeps us in the dark concerning our relations in this life, how much sooner we have formerly been in care about them, ver. 21, 22. (3.) The use Job makes of all this. (1.) He pleads it with God, who he thought was too strict and severe with him, ver. 16, 17. begging that, in consideration of his frailty, he would not contend with him, ver. 3. but grant him some respite, ver. 6. (2.) He engageth himself to prepare for death, ver. 14. and encourageth himself to hope that it would be comfortable to him, ver. 15. This chapter is proper for funeral solemnities, and serious meditations on it will help us both to get good by the death of others, and to get ready for our own.*

1. **M**AN, that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. 2. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. 3. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? 4. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. 5. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. 6. Turn from him, that he may rest till he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day.

We are led to think,

1. Of the original of human life: God is indeed its great original, for he *breathed into man the breath of life*, and in him we live; but we date it from our birth, and thence we must date both its frailty and its pollution. (1.) Its frailty; *man that is born of a woman*, is therefore of few days, ver. 1. It may refer to the first woman, who was called Eve, because she was the mother of all living: of her, who being deceived by the tempter, was first in the transgression; we are all born, and consequently derive from her that sin, and corruption, which both shortens our days and saddens them. Or it may refer to every man's immediate mother. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we know that *partus sequitur ventrem*, the child takes after the mother; let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, or in the strength of his father, but remember that he is born of a woman, and that, when God pleaseth, the *mighty men become as women*, *Jer.* li. 30. (2.) Its pollution, ver. 4. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* If a man be born of a woman that is a sinner, how can it be otherwise but that he should be a sinner? See chap. xxv. 4. *How can he be clean that is born of a woman?* Clean children cannot come from unclean parents, any more than pure streams from an impure spring, or grapes from thorns. Our habitual



habitual corruption is derived with our nature from our parents, and is therefore bred in the bone: our blood is not only tainted by a legal conviction, but tainted with a hereditary disease. Our Lord Jesus, being made sin for us, is said to be *made of a woman*, Gal. iv. 4.

2. Of the nature of human life. It is a flower, it is a shadow, *ver. 2*. The flower is fading, and all its beauty soon withers and is gone. The shadow is fleeting, and its very being will soon be lost and drowned in the shadows of the night: of neither do we make any account, in neither do we put any confidence.

3. Of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. Man is of few days. Life is computed not by months or years but by days, for we cannot be sure of any day but it may be our last: these days are few, fewer than we think of; few, at the most, in comparison with the days of the first patriarchs, much more in comparison with the days of eternity; but much fewer to most who come short of what we call the age of man. Man sometimes no sooner comes forth but he is cut down; comes forth out of the womb, but he dies in the cradle; comes forth into the world, and enters into the business of it, but is hurried away as soon as he has laid his hand to the plough. If not cut down immediately, yet fleeing as a shadow, and never continues in one stay, in one shape, but the fashion of it passeth away: so doth this world, and our life in it, 1 Cor. vii. 31.

4. Of the calamitous state of human life: man, as he is short-lived, so he is sad-lived. Though he had but a few days to spend here, yet if he might rejoice in those few it were well enough; a short life and a merry is the boast of some; but it is not so; during these few days he is full of trouble, not only troubled, but full of trouble; full of commotion, so the word is; either toiling or fretting, grieving or fearing: no day passeth without some vexation, some hurry, some disorder or other. He has his bellyful of trouble: they that are fond of the world shall have enough of it. He is *satur tremore*. The fewness of his days creates him a continual trouble and uneasiness in expectation of the period of them, and he always hangs in doubt of his life. Yet, since man's days are so full of trouble, it is well they are few, that the soul's imprisonment in the body, and banishment from the Lord, is not perpetual, is not long. When we come to heaven, our days will be many, and perfectly free from trouble; and, in the mean time, faith, hope, and love, balance the present grievances.

5. Of the sinfulness of human life, arising from the sinfulness of the human nature. So some understand that question, *ver. 4*. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* A clean performance from an unclean principle. Note, Actual transgressions are the natural product of habitual corruption; which is therefore called original sin, because it is the original of all our sins. This holy Job here laments, as all that are sanctified do, running up the streams to the fountain, (*Psal. li. 5.*) and some think he intends it as a plea with God for compassion; Lord, be not extreme to mark my sins of human frailty and infirmity, for thou knowest my weakness, *O remember that I am flesh!* The Chaldee paraphrase has an observable reading of this verse: *Who can make a man clean that is polluted with sin? Cannot one? that is God; or who but God, who is one, and will spare him?* God, by his Almighty grace, can change the skin of the Ethiopian, the skin of Job, though clothed with worms.

6. Of the settled period of human life, *ver. 5*. We are here assured, (1.) That our life will come to an end; our days upon earth are not numberless, are not endless, no, they are numbered, and will soon be finished, *Dan. v. 26*. (2.) That it is determined in the counsel and decree of God how long we shall live, and when we shall die. The number of our months is with God; at the dispose of his power, which cannot be controuled, and under the ken of his omniscience, which cannot be deceived. It is certain, God's providence has the ordering of the period of our lives; our times are in his hand, the powers of nature depend upon him and act under him: in him we live and move; diseases are his servants; he kills and makes alive; nothing comes to pass by chance; no not the execution done by a bow drawn at a venture: it is therefore certain God's prescience has determined it before; for known unto God are all his works. Whatever he doth he determined, yet with a regard partly to fly to the settled course of nature; the end and the means are determined together; and, to the settled rules of moral government, punishing evil and rewarding good in this life; we are no more governed by the Stoic's blind fate than by the Epicurean's blind fortune. (3.) That the bounds God has fixed we cannot pass, for his counsels are unalterable, his foresight being infallible.

These considerations Job here urges as reasons,

1. Why God should not be so strict in taking cognizance of him, and of his slips and failings, *ver. 3*. Having such a corrupt nature within, and being liable to so much trouble, which is a constant temptation from without, dost thou open thine eyes and fasten them upon such a one, extremely to mark what I do amiss? *chap. xiii. 27.* and dost thou bring me, such a worthless worm as I am, into judgment with thee, who art so quick-sighted to discover the least failing; so holy to hate it, so just to condemn it, and so mighty to punish it? The consideration of our own inability to contend with God, of our own sinfulness and weakness, should engage us to pray, *Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant!*

2. Why he should not be so severe in his dealings with him. Lord, I have but a little time to live, and must certainly and shortly go hence, and the few days I have to spend here are at the best full of trouble. O let me have a little respite, *ver. 6*. Turn from plaguing a poor creature thus, and let him rest awhile; allow him some breathing-time, *until he shall accomplish as a hireling his day*. It is appointed to me once to die, let that one day suffice me, and let me not thus be continually dying, dying a thousand deaths. Let it suffice that my life at best is as the day of a hireling, a day of toil and labour; I am content to accomplish that, and will make the best of the common hardships of human life, the burden and heat of the day, but let me not feel those uncommon tortures, let not my life be as the day of a malefactor, all execution-day. Thus may we find some relief under great troubles, by recommending ourselves to the compassion of that God, who knows our frame, and will consider it, and our being out of frame too.

7. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. 8. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground: 9. Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. 10. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? 11. As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: 12. So man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more; they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. 13. O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret, until thy wrath be past: that thou wouldst

appoint me a set time, and remember me! 14. If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. 15. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

We have seen what Job has to say concerning life; let us now see what he has to say concerning death, which his thoughts were very much conversant with now he was sick and fore. It is not unreasonable when we are in health to think of dying, but it is an inexcusable incogitancy, if, when we are already taken into the custody of death's messengers, we look upon it as a thing at a distance. Job has already shewn that death will come, and that its hour is already fixed. Now here he shews,

1. That death is a removal for good and ail out of this world. This he had spoken of before, *chap. vii. 9, 10.* and now he mentions it again; for though it be a truth that needs not to be proved, yet it needs to be much considered, that it may be duly improved.

(1.) A man cut down by death will not revive again as a tree cut down will. What hope there is of a tree he shews very elegantly, *ver. 7, 8, 9*. If the body of a tree be cut down, and only the stem or stump left in the ground, though it seemed dead and dry, yet it will shoot out young boughs again, as if it were but newly planted. The moisture of the earth and the rain of heaven are as it were scented and perceived by the stump of a tree, and they have an influence upon it to revive it; but the dead body of a man would not perceive them, nor be in the least affected by them. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, when his being deprived of the use of his reason was signified by the cutting down of a tree; his return to it again was signified by the leaving of the stump in the earth, with a band of iron and brass, to be wet with the dew of heaven, *Dan. iv. 15*. But man has no such prospect of a return to life. The vegetable life is a cheap and easy thing; the scent of water will recover it: the animal life in some insects and fowls is so; the heat of the sun retrieves it: but, the rational soul, when once retired, is too great, too noble, a thing, to be recalled by any of the powers of nature; it is out of the reach of sun or rain, and cannot be restored but by the immediate operations of Omnipotence itself: for, *ver. 10*. *Muzz dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?* Two words are here used for man. Geber, a mighty man, though mighty, dies; Adam, a man of the earth, because earthly, gives up the ghost. Note. Man is a dying creature: he is here described by what occurs, (1.) Before death, he wasteth away, he is continually wasting; dying daily, spending upon the quick stock of life: sickness and old age are wasting things to the flesh, the strength, the beauty. (2.) In death he gives up the ghost, the soul leaves the body and returns to God who gave it, the Father of spirits. (3.) After death, where is he? he is not where he was, his place knows him no more; but, is he no where? So some read it: yes, he is somewhere; and it is a very awful consideration to think where they are that have given up the ghost, and where we shall be when we give it up. It is gone to the world of spirits, gone into eternity, gone to return no more to this world.

(2.) A man laid down in the grave will not rise up again, *ver. 11, 12*. Every night we lie down to sleep, and in the morning we awake and rise again, but at death we must lie down in the grave, not to awake or arise again to such a world, such a state, as we are now in; never to awake or arise until the heavens, the faithful measures of time, shall be no more, and consequently time itself shall come to an end, and be swallowed up in eternity: so that the life of man may fitly be compared to the waters of a land-flood, which spread far and make a great shew; but they are shallow, and when they are cut off from the sea or river, the swelling or overflowing of which was the cause of them, they soon decay and dry up, and their place knows them no more. The waters of life are soon exhaled and disappear; the body, like some of those waters, sinks and soaks into the earth, and is buried there; the soul, like others of them, is drawn upwards to mingle with the waters above the firmament. The learned Sir Richard Blackmore makes this also to be a dissimilitude: if the waters decay and be dried up in the summer, yet they will return again in the winter; but it is not so with the life of man. Take part of his paraphrase in his own words:

*A flowing river or a standing lake  
May their dry banks and naked shores forsake,  
Their waters may exhale and upwards move,  
Their channel leave to roll in clouds above;  
But the returning winter will restore  
What, in the summer, they had lost before:  
But if, O man, thy vital stream desert  
Their purple channels, and defraud the heart,  
With fresh recruits they ne'er will be supplied,  
Nor feel their leaping life's returning tide.*

2. That yet there will be a return of man to life again in another world; at the end of time, when the heavens are no more. Then they shall awake and be raised out of their sleep. The resurrection of the dead was doubtless an article of Job's creed, as appears, *chap. xix. 26.* and to that it should seem he has an eye here; where in the belief of that we have three things:

1. A humble petition for a hiding-place in the grave, *ver. 13*. It was not only in a passionate weariness of this life that he wished to die, but in a pious assurance of a better life, to which at length he shall arise. O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave! The grave is not only a resting-place but a hiding-place to the people of God; God has the key of the grave, to let in now, and to let out at the resurrection: He hides men in the grave, as we hide our treasure in a place of secrecy and safety; and he that hides will find, and not all shall be lost. O that thou wouldst hide me, not only from the perils and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life; let me lie in the grave reserved for immortality; in secret from all the world, but not from thee, not from those eyes which saw my substance when first curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, *Psal. cxxxix. 15, 16*. There let me lie, (1.) *Until thy wrath be past*. As long as the bodies of the saints lie in the grave, so long there are some remains of that wrath which they were by nature children of, so long they are under some of the efforts of sin; but when the body is raised, it is wholly past; death, the last enemy, will then be totally destroyed. (2.) *Until the set time comes for my being remembered*, as Noah was remembered in the ark, (*Gen. viii. 1.*) where God hid him not only from the destruction of the old world, but for the reparation of a new world. The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave; there is a time appointed, a time set, for their being enquired after. We cannot be sure that we shall look through the darkness of our present troubles, and see good days after them in this world; but if we can but get well to the grave, we may with an eye of faith look through the darkness of that, as Job here, and see better days, on the other side it, in a better world.

2. A holy resolution patiently to attend the will of God both in his death and



and in his resurrection, *ver. 14. If a man die shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come.* Job's friends proving miserable comforters, he set himself to be the more his own comforter: his case was now bad, but he pleased himself with the expectation of a change: I think it cannot be meant of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. His friends indeed flattered him with the hopes of that, but he himself all along despaired of it. Comforts founded upon uncertainties, at best must needs be uncertain comforts; and therefore no doubt it is something more sure than that which he here bears up himself with the expectation of. The change he waits for must therefore be understood either, (1.) Of the change of the resurrection, when the vile body shall be changed, *Phil. iii. 21.* and a great one and a glorious change it will be; and then that question, *if a man die, shall he live again?* must be taken by way of admiration: strange! shall these dry bones live? if so, all the time appointed for the continuance of the separation between soul and body, my separate soul shall wait until that change comes, when it shall be united again to the body, and *my flesh shall also rest in hope, Psal. xvi. 9.* Or, (2.) Of the change at death. *If a man die shall he live again?* no, not such a life as he now lives, and therefore I will patiently wait until that change comes which will put a period to my calamities, and not impatiently wish for the anticipation of it as I have done. Observe here, 1. That it is a serious thing to die, it is a work by itself. It is a change; there is a visible change in the body; its appearance altered, its actions brought to an end; but a greater change with the soul, which quits the body, and removes to the world of spirits, finisheth its state of probation, and enters upon that of retribution. This change will come, and it will be a final change, not like the transmutations of the elements, which return to their former state: no, we must die, not thus to live again. It is but once to die, and that had need be well done that is to be done but once. An error here is fatal, conclusive, and not again to be rectified. 2. That therefore it is the duty of every one of us to wait for that change, and to continue waiting all the days of our appointed time. The time of life is an appointed time; that time is to be reckoned by days, and those days are to be spent in waiting for our change. That is, (1.) We must expect that it will come, and think much of it. (2.) We must desire that it would come, as those that long to be with Christ. (3.) We must be willing to tarry until it doth come, as those that believe God's time to be the best. (4.) We must give diligence to get ready against it comes, that it may be a blessed change to us.

3. A joyful expectation of bliss and satisfaction in this, *ver. 15. Then thou shalt call, and I will answer thee.* Now he was under such a cloud that he could not, he durst not, answer, *chap. ix. 15, 35.—xiii. 22.* but he comforted himself with this, that there would come a time when God would call, and he should answer; then, *i. e. 1.* At the resurrection thou shalt call me out of the grave, by the voice of the archangel, and I will answer, and come at the call. The body is the *work of God's hand*, and he will have a desire to that, having prepared a glory for it. Or, 2. At death. Thou shalt call my body to the grave, and my soul to thyself, and I will answer, Ready, Lord, ready; coming, coming; here I am. Gracious souls can cheerfully answer death's summons and appear to his writ. Their spirits are not forcibly required from them, as *Luke xii. 20.* but willingly resigned by them; and the earthly tabernacle not violently pulled down, but voluntarily laid down: with this assurance thou wilt have a desire to the *work of thy hands*; thou hast mercy in store for me, not only as made by thy providence, but new made by thy grace, otherwise *he that made them will not save them.* Note, Grace in the soul is the work of God's own hands, and therefore he will not forsake it in this world, *Psal. cxxxviii. 8.* but will have a desire to it, to perfect it in the other, and to crown it with endless glory.

16. For, now thou numberest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin? 17. My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity. 18. And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought; and the rock is moved out of his place. 19. The waters wear the stones: thou washeth away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth, and thou destroyest the hope of man. 20. Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changeest his countenance, and sendest him away. 21. His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them. 22. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.

Job here returns to his complaints; and, though he is not without hope of future bliss, he finds it very hard to get over his present grievances.

1. He complains of the particular hardships he apprehended himself under from the strictness of God's justice, *ver. 16, 17.* Therefore he longed to go hence to that world where God's wrath will be past, because now he was under the continual tokens of it, as a child, under the severe discipline of the rod, longs to be of age: when shall my change come? for now thou seemest to me to number my steps, and watch over my sin, and seal it up in a bag, as bills of indictment are kept safe to be produced against the prisoner. See *Deut. xxxii. 24.* Thou takest all advantages against me; all scores are called over; every infirmity is animadverted upon; and no sooner is a false step taken but I am beaten for it. Now, (1.) Job doth right to the divine justice in owning that he smarted for his sins and transgressions; that he had done enough to deserve all that was laid upon him; for there was sin in all his steps, and he was guilty of transgression enough to bring all this ruin upon him, if it were strictly enquired into; he is far from saying that he perisheth being innocent. But, (2.) He doth wrong to the divine goodness, in suggesting that God was extreme to mark what he did amiss, and make the worst of every thing: he spoke to this purpose, *chap. xiii. 27.* It was unadvisedly said, and therefore we will not dwell too much upon it. God doth indeed see all our sins; he sees sin in his own people, but he is not severe in reckoning with us; nor is the law ever stretched against us, but we are punished less than our iniquities deserve. The transgression of the impenitent God doth indeed seal and sow up against the day of wrath, but the sins of his people he blots out as a cloud.

2. He complains of the wailing condition of mankind in general: we live in a dying world; *who knows the power of God's anger; by which we are consumed and troubled, and in which all our days are passed away!* See *Pf. xc. 7, 8, 9—11.* And who can bear up against his rebukes? *Pf. xxxix. 11.*

(1.) We see the decays of the earth itself. (1.) Of the strongest parts of it, *ver. 18.* Nothing will last always; for we see even mountains moulder and come to nought; they wither and fall as a leaf; rocks wax old and pass away by the continual beating of the sea against them. *The wa-*

*ters wear the stones* with constant droppings, *non vi, sed sepe cadendo.* On this earth every part is the worse for the wearing: (*Tempus edax rerum.*) It is not so with the heavenly bodies. (2.) Of the natural products of it: the things which grow out of the earth, and seem to be firmly rooted in it, are sometimes, by an excess of rain, washed away, *ver. 19.* Some think he pleads this for relief: Lord, my patience will not hold out always, even rocks and mountains will fail at last, therefore cease the controversy.

(2.) No marvel if we then see the decays of man upon the earth, for he is of the earth, earthy. Job begins to think his case is not singular, and therefore he ought to reconcile himself to the common lot.

We perceive by many instances,

1. How vain it is to expect much from the enjoyments of life: *Thou destroyest the hope of man.* i. e. puttest an end to all the projects he had framed, and all the prospects of satisfaction he had flattered himself with. Death will be the destruction of all those hopes which are built upon worldly confidences and confined to worldly comfort: hope in Christ, and hope in heaven; death will consummate, and not destroy.

2. How vain it is to struggle against the assaults of death, *ver. 20. Thou prevailest for ever against him.* Note, 1. Man is an unequal match for God: whom God contends with he will certainly prevail against, prevail for ever against, so that they shall never be able to make head again. 2. The stroke of death is irresistible; it is to no purpose to dispute its summons; God prevails against man and he passeth, passeth away, and lo he is not. Look upon a dying man and see,

1. How his looks are altered. Thou changeest his countenance two ways. (1.) By the disease of his body. When a man has been a few days sick, what a change is there in his countenance! how much more when he has been a few minutes dead! the countenance, that was majestic and awful, becomes mean and despicable; that was lovely and amiable, becomes ghastly and frightful: bury my dead out of my sight. Where then is the admired beauty? death changeth the countenance and then sends us away out of this world; gives us our dismissal hence, never to return. (2.) By the discomposure of his mind. Note, The approach of death will make the strongest and stoutest to change countenance; it will make the most merry smiling countenance to look grave and serious, and the most bold and daring countenance to look pale and timorous.

2. How little he is concerned in the affairs of his family, which, when time was, lay so near his heart: when he is in the hands of his harbingers of death, suppose struck with a palsy or apoplexy, or delirious in a fever, or in conflict with death; tell him then never so good news concerning his children, or never so bad, it is all alike; he knows it not, he perceives it not, *ver. 21.* He is going to that world where he will be a perfect stranger to all those things which here filled and affected him: the consideration of this should moderate our cares concerning our children and families. God will know what comes of them when we are gone: to him therefore let us commit them; with him let us leave them; and not burden ourselves with needless fruitless cares concerning them.

3. How dreadful the agonies of death are, *ver. 22. While his flesh is upon him,* (so it may be read,) the body is so lothe to lay it down, *he shall have pain;* and, *while his soul is within him,* the spirit he is so lothe to resign, it shall mourn. Note, Dying work is hard work, dying pangs are commonly fore pangs. It is folly therefore for men to defer their repentance to a death-bed, and to have that to do which is the one thing needful, when they are really unfit to do any thing; but it is true wisdom, by making our peace with God in Christ, and keeping a good conscience to treasure up comforts which will support and relieve us against the pains and sorrows of a dying hour.

## C H A P. XV.

Perhaps Job was so clear and so well satisfied in the goodness of his own cause, that he thought if he had not convinced, yet he had at least silenced, all his three friends; but, it seems, he had not; at this chapter they begin a second attack upon him, each of them charging him afresh with as much vehemence as before. It is natural to us to be fond of our own sentiments, and therefore to be firm to them, and hardly to be brought to recede from them. Eliphaz here sticks close to the principles upon which he had condemned Job, and (1.) He reproves him for justifying himself, and fathers on him many ill things which are unfairly inferred from thence, *ver. 2—13.* (2.) He persuades him to humble himself before God, and to take shame to himself, *ver. 14—16.* (3.) He reads him a long lecture concerning the woful estate of wicked people that harden their hearts against God, and the judgments that are prepared for them, *ver. 17—35.* A good use may be made both of his reproofs, for they are plain, and of his doctrine, for it is sound; though both the one and the other are misapplied to Job.

1. **T**HEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said, 2. Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? 3. Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? 4. Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God. 5. For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty. 6. Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee. 7. Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills? 8. Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? 9. What knowest thou that we know not? what understandest thou, which is not in us? 10. With us are both the grey-headed, and very aged men; much elder than my father. 11. Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee? 12. Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what do thine eyes wink at? 13. That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such words go out of thy mouth? 14. What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15. Behold he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. 16. How much more abominable and filthy is man which drinketh iniquity like water!



Eliphaz here falls very foul upon Job, because he contradicted what he and his colleagues had said, and did not acquiesce in it, and applaud it as they expected. Proud people are apt thus to take it very heinously if they may not have leave to dictate and give law to all about them, and to run upon those as ignorant and obstinate, and all that is nought, that cannot, in every thing, say as they say.

Several great crimes Eliphaz here chargeth Job with, only because he would not own himself a hypocrite.

1. He charges him with folly and absurdity, *ver. 2, 3.* That, whereas he had been reputed a wise man, he had now quite forfeited his reputation; any one would say that his wisdom was departed from him, he talked so extravagantly, and so little to the purpose. Bildad began thus, *chap. viii. 2.* and Zophar, *chap. xi. 2, 3.* It is common for angry disputants thus to represent one another's reasonings as impertinent and ridiculous, more than there is cause, forgetting the doom of him that calls his brother Raca, and thou fool. It is true, (1.) That there is in the world a great deal of vain knowledge, science falsely so called, that is useless, and therefore worthless. (2.) That this is the knowledge that puffeth up, with which men fill their bellies, and swell in a fond conceit of their own accomplishments. (3.) That whatever vain knowledge a man may have in his head, if he would be thought a wise man, he must not utter it, but let it die with himself, as it deserves. (4.) Unprofitable talk is evil talk; we must give an account in the great day not only for wicked words but for idle words. Speeches, therefore, which do no good, which do no service either to God or our neighbour, or no justice to ourselves, which are no way to the use of edifying, were better unspoken. Such words are as wind, light and empty, especially that are as the east-wind, hurtful and pernicious, it will be ill filling either ourselves or others with, for they will pass very ill in the account. (5.) Vain knowledge and unprofitable talk ought to be reprov'd and checked, especially in a wise man, whom it worst becomes, and who doth most hurt by the ill example of it.

2. He chargeth him with impiety and irreligion, *ver. 4.* *Thou castest off fear, i. e.* the fear of God, and that regard to him which thou shouldst have, and then restrainest prayer. See what religion is summed up in fearing God and praying to him. The former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected; and those that live without prayer certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer, it is a sign they cast off fear. Surely those have no reverence of God's majesty, no dread of his wrath, and are in no care about their souls and eternity, who make no applications to God for his grace. Those that are prayerless are fearful and graceless. When the fear of God is cast off, all sin is let in, and a door open to all manner of profaneness. It is especially bad with those who have had some fear of God, but now they have cast it off; have been frequent in prayer, but now they restrain it. How are they fallen! how is their first love lost! It is not a kind of force put upon themselves. The fear of God should stick to them, but they throw it off; prayer would be uttered, but they restrain it; and in both baffle their convictions. Those that either omit prayer, or straiten and abridge themselves in it, quenching the spirit of adoption, and denying themselves the liberty they might take in the duty, restrain prayer: this is bad enough, but it is worse to restrain others from prayer: to prohibit and discourage prayer, as Darius, *Dan. vi. 7.*

Now Eliphaz charges this upon Job, either, (1.) As that which was his own practice. He thought Job talked of God with such liberty as if he had been hail-fellow with him; charged him so high with hard usage of him, and challenged him so often to a fair trial, that he had quite thrown off all religious regard to him: this charge was utterly false, and yet wanted not some colour. We ought not only to take care that we keep up prayer and the fear of God, but that we never drop any unwary expressions, which may give occasion to those who seek occasion to question our sincerity and constancy in religion. Or, (2.) As that which others would infer from the doctrine he maintained. If this be true (thinks Eliphaz) which Job saith, that a man may be thus sorely afflicted, and yet be a good man, then farewell all religion; farewell prayer and the fear of God: If all things come alike to all, and the best men may have the worst treatment in this world, every one will be ready to say, *It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it to keep his ordinances?* Mal. iii. 14. *Ferily I have cleansed my hands in vain,* Mal. lxxiii. 13, 14. Who will be honest, if the tabernacles of robbers prosper? *chap. xii. 6.* If there be no forgiveness with God, (*chap. vii. 21.*) who will fear him? *Psal. cxxx. 4.* If he laugh at the trial of the innocent, *chap. ix. 23.* If he be so difficult of access, *chap. ix. 32.* who will pray to him? Note, It is a piece of injustice, which even wise and good men are too often guilty of in the heat of disputation, to charge upon their adversaries those consequences of their opinions which are not fairly drawn from them, and which really they abhor. This is not doing as we would be done by.

Upon this strained innuendo Eliphaz grounds that high charge of impiety, *ver. 5.* *Thy mouth utters thine iniquity;* teach it, so the word is. Thou teachest others to have the same hard thoughts of God and religion that thou thyself hast. It is bad to break even the least of the commandments, but worse to teach men so, Matt. v. 19. If we ever thought evil, let us lay our hand upon our mouth to suppress the evil thought, *Prov. xxx. 32.* and let us by no means utter it, that is, putting an imprimatur to it, publishing it with allowance, to the dishonour of God, and the damage of others. Observe, when men have cast off fear and prayer, their mouths utter iniquity. They that cease to do good soon learn to do ill. What can we expect but all manner of iniquity from those that arm not themselves with the grace of God against it? But, *thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty, i. e.* Thou utterest thine iniquity with some shew and pretence of piety, mixing some good words with the bad, as hucksters do with their wares to help them off. The mouth of iniquity could not do so much mischief as it doth, without the tongue of the crafty. The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, *Rom. xvi. 18.* The tongue of the crafty speaks with design and deliberation, and therefore they that use it may be said to choose it, as that which will serve their purpose better than the tongue of the upright: but it will be found at last that honesty is the best policy.

Eliphaz, in his first discourse, had proceeded against Job upon mere surmise, *chap. iv. 6, 7.* But now he has got proof against him from his own discourses, *ver. 6.* *Thy own mouth condemns thee, and not I:* but then he should have considered that he and his fellows had provoked him to say that which now they took advantage of; and that was not fair. Those are most effectually condemned that are condemned by themselves, *Tit. iii. 11.* *Luke xix. 22.* Many a man needs no more to sink him than for his own tongue to fall upon him.

3. He charged him with intolerable arrogance and self-conceitedness. It was a just, and reasonable, and modest demand Job had made, *chap. ix. 3.* Allow that I have understanding as well as you: but see how they seek occasion against him; that is misconstrued, as if he pretended to be wiser than any man. Because he will not grant to them, they will have it thought that he claims to himself, the monopoly of wisdom, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* As if he thought he had the advantage of all mankind, (1.) In length of acquaint-

ance with the world, which furnisheth men with so much the more experience. *Art thou the first man that was born?* and consequently senior to us, and better able to give the sense of antiquity, and the judgment of the first and earliest, the wisest and purest, ages? Art thou prior to Adam? so it may be read. Did not he suffer for sin, and yet wilt not thou, who art so great a sufferer, own thyself a sinner? *Wast thou made before the hills?* as wisdom herself was, *Prov. viii. 23, &c.* Must God's counsels, which are as the great mountains, *Psal. xxxvi. 6.* and immovable as the everlasting hills, be subject to thy notions, and truckle to them? Dost thou know more of the world than any of us do? No, thou art but of yesterday, any more than we, *chap. v. 9.* Or, (2.) In intimacy of acquaintance with God, *ver. 8.* *Hast thou heard the secret of God?* Dost thou pretend to be of the cabinet council of heaven, that thou canst give better reasons than others can for God's proceedings? There are secret things of God which belong not to us, and which therefore we must not pretend to account for: those are daringly presumptuous that do. He also represents him, (1.) As assuming to himself such knowledge as none else had. *Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?* as if none were wise but thou. Job had said, *chap. xiii. 2.* *What ye know, the same do I know also,* and now they return upon him according to the usage of eager disputants, who think they have a privilege to commend themselves: *What knowest thou that we know not?* How natural are such replies as these in the heat of argument? but how simple do they look afterwards upon the review? (2.) As opposing the stream of antiquity; a venerable name which all contending parties strive to shelter themselves under the umbrage of. *With us are the grey-headed and very aged men,* *ver. 10.* We have the fathers on our side; all the ancient doctors of the church are of our opinion. A thing soon said, but not so soon proved; and, when proved, truth is not so soon discovered and proved by it, as most people imagine. David preferred right scripture knowledge before that of antiquity, *Psal. cxix. 100.* *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.* Or perhaps one, or more, if not all three, of these friends of Job, were elder than he, *chap. xxxii. 6.* and therefore they thought he was bound to acknowledge them to be in the right. And this also serves contenders to make a noise with to very little purpose. If they are elder than their adversaries, and can say they knew such a thing before they were born, it will serve them to bounce and Hector with; whereas the eldest are not always the wisest, *chap. xxxii. 9.*

4. He chargeth him with a contempt of the counsels and comforts that were given him by his friends, *ver. 11.* *Are the consolations of God small with thee?* (1.) Eliphaz takes it ill that Job did not value the comforts, which he and his friends administered to him, more than it seems he did; and did not welcome every word they said as gospel. It is true, they had said some very good things, but in their application to Job, they were miserable comforters. Note, We are apt to think that great and considerable which we ourselves say, when others perhaps, with good reason, think it small and trifling. Paul found that those who seemed to be somewhat, yet in conference added nothing to him, *Gal. ii. 6.* (2.) He represents this as a slight put upon divine consolations in general, as if they were of small account with him, whereas really they were not: if he had not highly valued them, he could not have borne up as he did under his sufferings. Note, 1. The consolations of God are not in themselves small. Divine comforts are great things, *i. e.* The comfort which is from God, especially the comfort which is in God. 2. The consolations of God not being small in themselves, it is very ill if they be small with us. It is a great affront to God, and an evidence of a degenerate depraved mind, to disesteem and undervalue spiritual delights, and despise the pleasant land. What (saith Eliphaz) is there any secret thing with thee? Hast thou some cordial to support thyself with, that is, a Proprium, an Arcanum, that no body else can pretend to, or knows any thing of? Or, is there some secret sin harboured and indulged in thy bosom, which hinders the operation of divine comforts? None disesteem divine comforts but those that secretly affect the world and the flesh.

5. He chargeth him with opposition to God himself, and to religion, *ver. 12, 13.* *Why dost thine heart carry thee away into such indecent, irreligious, expressions?* Note, Every man is tempted when he is drawn away from his own lust, *Jam. i. 14.* If we fly off from God and our duty, or fly out into any thing amiss, it is our own heart that carries us away. *If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.* And there is a violence, an impetus, in the by-turnings of the soul; the corrupt heart carries men away, as it were by force, against their convictions. What is it that thine eyes wink at? Why so careless and mindless of what is said to thee? hearing it, as if thou wert half asleep? Why so scornful, disdainful what we say, as if it were below thee to take notice of it? What have we said that deserves to be thus slighted? Nay, *that thou turnest our friend against God?* It was bad that his heart was carried away from God, but more worse that it was turned against God: but they that forsake God will soon break out in open enmity to him. But how did this appear? Why, thou lettest such words go out of thy mouth, reflecting on God, and his justice and goodness. It is the character of the wicked, that they *set their mouth against the heavens,* *Psal. lxxiii. 9.* which is a certain indication that the spirit is turned against God. He thought Job's spirit was soured against God; and so turned from what it had been, and exasperated at his dealings with him. Eliphaz wanted candour and charity, else he would not have put such a harsh construction upon the speeches of one that had such a settled reputation for piety, and was now in temptation. This was in effect to give the cause on Satan's side, and to own that Job had done as Satan said he would, *curse God to his face.*

6. He chargeth him with justifying himself to that degree, as even to deny his share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature, *ver. 14.* *What is man, that he should be clean?* *i. e.* that he should pretend to be so, or that any should expect to find him so: what is he that is born of a woman, a sinful woman, that he should be righteous? Note, 1. Righteousness is cleanliness, it makes us acceptable to God and easy to ourselves, *Psal. xviii. 24.* 2. Man in his fallen state cannot pretend to be clean and righteous before God, either to acquit himself to God's justice, or recommend himself to his favour. 3. He is therefore to be adjudged unclean and unrighteous, because born of a woman, from whom he derives a corrupt nature, which is both his guilt and his pollution. With these plain truths Eliphaz thinks to convince Job, whereas he had just now said the same, *chap. xiv. 4.* *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* But doth it therefore follow, that Job is a hypocrite and a wicked man, which is all that he denied? By no means. Though man, as born of a woman, is not clean, yet as born again of the Spirit, he is.

Farther to evince this, he here shews, 1. That the brightest creatures are imperfect and impure before God, *ver. 15.* God placeth no confidence in saints and angels, he employs both, but trusts neither with his service without giving them fresh supplies of strength and wisdom for it, as knowing they are not sufficient of themselves, neither more nor better than his grace makes them. He takes no complacency in the heavens themselves. How pure soever they seem to us, in his eye they have many a speck, and many a flaw: *The heavens are not clean* in



in his sight. If the stars (saith Mr. Caryl), have no light in the sight of the sun, what light has the sun in the sight of God! See *Isa. xxiv. 23.*

2. That man is much more so, *ver. 16. How much more abominable and filthy is man!* If saints are not to be trusted, much less sinners. If the heavens are not pure, which are as God made them, much less man that is degenerated: nay, he is abominable and filthy in the sight of God, and, if ever he repent, he is so in his own sight, and therefore he abhors himself. Sin is an odious thing, it makes men hateful. The body of sin is so, and is therefore called a dead body, a loathsome thing. Is it not a filthy thing, and enough to turn one's stomach, to see a man will swine-meat, or some stinking nasty stuff? Such is the filthiness of man, that he drinks iniquity (that abominable thing which the Lord hates) as greedily, and with as much pleasure, as a man drinks water when he is thirsty. It is his constant drink: it is natural to sinners to commit iniquity. It gratifies, but doth not satisfy, the appetites of the old man. It is like water to a man in a drop: the more men sin, the more they would sin.

17. I will shew thee, hear me, and that *which I have seen I will declare.* 18. Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid it: 19. Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them. 20. The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. 21. A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him. 22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword. 23. He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at hand. 24. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. 25. For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. 26. He runneth upon him even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers: 27. Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on his flanks. 28. And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps. 29. He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth. 30. He shall not depart out of darkness, the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away. 31. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity: for vanity shall be his recompence. 32. It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green. 33. He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive. 34. For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. 35. They conceive mischief and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit.

Eliphaz, having reproved Job for his answers, here comes to maintain, his own thesis, upon which he built his censure of Job. His opinion is, that those that are wicked are certainly miserable, whence he would infer, that those that are miserable are certainly wicked, and therefore Job was so.

Observe, (1.) His solemn preface to this discourse, in which he bespeaks Job's attention, which he had little reason to expect, he having given so little heed to, and put so little value upon, what Job had said. *Ver. 17.* I will shew thee that which is worth hearing, and not reason as thou dost with unprofitable talk. Thus apt are men, when they condemn others reasonings to commend their own. He promiseth to teach him, (1.) From his own experience and observation; that which I have myself seen, in divers instances I will declare. It is of good use to take notice of the providences of God concerning the children of men, from which many a good lesson may be learned. What good observations we have made and have found benefit by, ourselves, we should be ready to communicate for the benefit of others: and we may then speak boldly when we declare what we have seen. (2.) From the wisdom of the ancients, *ver. 18. which wise men have told from their fathers.* Note, The wisdom and learning of the moderns is very much derived from that of the ancients. Good children will learn a great deal from their good parents: and what we have learned from our ancestors we must transmit to our posterity, and not hide from the generations to come. See *Psal. lxxviii. 3, 4, 5, 6.* If the thread of the knowledge of many ages be cut off by the carelessness of one, and nothing be done to preserve it pure and entire, all that succeed fare the worse. The authorities Eliphaz vouched were authorities indeed, men of rank and figure, *ver. 19. unto whom alone the earth was given,* and therefore you may suppose them favourites of heaven, and best capable of making observations concerning the affairs of this earth. The dictates of wisdom come with advantage from those that are in places of dignity and power, as Solomon's, yet there is a wisdom which none of the princes of this world know, *1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.*

(2.) The discourse itself. He here aims to shew,

(1.) That those who are wise and good do ordinarily prosper in this world. This he only hints at, *ver. 19.* That those, of whose mind he was, were such as had the earth given to them, and to them only; they enjoyed it entirely and peaceably, and no stranger passed among them, either to share with them, or give disturbance to them. Job had said, *The earth was given into the hand of the wicked,* chap. ix. 24. No, saith Eliphaz, it is given into the hands of the saints, and runs along with the faith committed unto them; and they are not robbed and plundered by strangers and enemies making inroads upon them: as thou art by the Sabeans and Chaldeans. But, because many of God's people have remarkably prospered in this world, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it doth not therefore follow, that those who are crossed and impoverished, as Job, are not God's people.

(2.) That wicked people, and particularly oppressors, and tyrannizing rulers, are subject to continual terrors; live very uncomfortably, and perish

very miserably. On this head he enlargeth; shewing, that even they, who impiously dare God's judgment, yet cannot but dread them, and will feel them at last: he speaks in the singular number, the wicked man, some think meaning Nimrod, or perhaps Chedorlaomer, or some such mighty hunter before the Lord: I wish he doth not mean Job himself, whom he expressly chargeth both with the tyranny and with the timorousness here described, *chap. xxii. 9, 10.* Here he thinks the application easy, and that Job might in this description, as in a glass, see his own face. Now,

1. Let us see how he describes the sinner who lives thus miserably. He doth not begin with that, but brings it in as a reason of his doom, *ver. 25—28.* It is no ordinary sinner, but one of the first rate, an oppressor, *ver. 20. a blasphemer and a persecutor,* one that neither fears God nor regards man.

1. He bids defiance to God and to his authority and power, *ver. 25.* Tell him of the divine law, and the obligations of it; he breaks those bonds asunder, and will not have, no not him that made him, to restrain him or rule over him. Tell him of the divine wrath, and the terrors of that; he bids the Almighty do his worst, he will have his will; he will have his way, in spite of him, and will not be controuled by law or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. He stretcheth out his hand against God; in defiance of him and of the power of his wrath. God is indeed out of his reach, but he stretcheth out his hand against him, to shew, that if it were in his power he would ungod him.

This speaks the audacious impiety of some sinners; who are really haters of God, *Rom. i. 30.* and whose carnal mind is not only an enemy to him, but enmity itself, *Rom. viii. 7.* But, alas! the sinner's malice is as impotent as it is impudent, what can he do? Why, he strengtheneth himself (he would be valiant, so some read it) against the Almighty, he thinks with his exorbitant despotic power to change times and laws, *Dan. vii. 25.* and in spite of providence to carry the day for rapine and wrong, clear of the check of conscience. Note, It is the prodigious madness of presumptuous sinners, that they enter the lists with Omnipotence: *Wo unto him that strives with his Maker!* That is generally taken for a farther description of the sinner's daring presumption, *ver. 26.* He runs upon him, upon God himself, in a direct opposition to him, to his precepts and providences, even upon his neck, as a desperate combatant, when he finds himself an unequal match for his adversary, flies in his face, though, at the same time, he falls on his sword's point or the sharp spike of his buckler. Every sinner runs from God; but the presumptuous sinner, who sins with a high hand, runs upon him, fights against him, and bids defiance to him; and it is easy to foretel what will be the issue.

2. He wraps himself up in security and sensuality, *ver. 27.* He covers his face with fatness. This signifies both the pampering of his flesh with daily delicious fare, and the hardening of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. Note, The gratifying of the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting that to the full, often turns to the damage of the soul and its interests: why is God forgot and slighted, but because the belly is made a god of, and the happiness placed in the delights of sense? They, that fill themselves with wine and strong drink, abandon all that is serious, and flatter themselves with hopes that to-morrow shall be as this day, *Isa. lvi. 12.* Wo to them that are thus at ease in Zion! *Amos vi. 1, 3, 4.* Luke xii. 19. The fat, that covers his face, makes him look bold and haughty, and that which covers his flanks makes him lie easy and soft, and feel little: but this will prove poor shelter against the darts of God's wrath.

3. He enriches himself with the spoils of all about him, *ver. 28.* He dwells in cities which he himself hath made desolate, by expelling the inhabitants out of them, that he might be placed alone in them, *Isa. v. 8.* It is strange what pleasure proud and cruel men can take in ruins, when they are of their own making, in destroying cities, *Psal. ix. 6.* and triumphing in the destruction, since they cannot otherwise make them their own, but by making them ready to become heaps, and frightening the inhabitants out of them. Note, Those that aim to engross the world to themselves, and grasp at all, lose the comfort of all, and make themselves miserable in the midst of all. How doth this tyrant gain his point, and make himself master of cities that have all the marks of antiquity upon them? We are told, *ver. 35.* he doth it by malice and falsehood, the two chief ingredients of his wickedness, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning: they conceive mischief, and then they effect it by preparing deceit, pretending to protect those whom they design to subdue, and making leagues of peace the more effectually to carry on the operations of war. From such wicked men God deliver all good men!

2. Let us see now what is the miserable condition of this wicked man, both in spiritual and temporal judgments.

1. His inward peace is continually disturbed. He seems to those about him to be easy, who therefore envy him, and wish themselves in his condition; but he, who knows what is in men, tells us, that a wicked man has so little comfort and satisfaction in his own breast, that he is rather to be pitied than envied.

(1.) His own conscience accuseth him, and, with the pangs and throbs of that, he travellet in pain all his days, *ver. 20.* He is continually uneasy at the thought of the cruelties he has been guilty of, and the blood in which he has embroiled his hands; his sins stare him in the face at every turn. *Diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos.*

(2.) He is vexed at the uncertainty of the continuance of his wealth and power; the number of years is hidden to the oppressor; he knows, whatever he pretends, that it will not last always, and has reason to fear it will not last long; and this he frets at.

(3.) He is under a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, (*Heb. x. 27.*) which puts him into, and keeps him in, a continual terror and consternation, so that he dwells with Cain in the land of Nod, or commotion, *Gen. iv. 16.* and is made, like *Pashur, Magor-missabib,* a terror round about, *Jer. xx. 3, 4. ver. 21.* A dreadful sound is in his ears. He knows both heaven and earth are incensed against him, that God is angry with him, and all the world hates him, and he has done nothing to make his peace with either, and therefore thinks every one that meets him will slay him, *Gen. iv. 14.* Or like a man absconding for debt, that thinks every man a bailiff. Fear came in at first with sin, *Gen. iii. 10.* and still attends it. Even in prosperity he is apprehensive that the destroyer will come upon him, either some destroying angel sent of God to avenge his quarrel; or some of his injured subjects that will be their own avengers. Those, who are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, usually go down slain to the pit, *Ezek. xxxii. 25.* the expectation of which makes them a terror to themselves. This is farther set forth, *ver. 22.* that he is in his own apprehension waited for of the sword, for he knows that he, who killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword, *Rev. xiii. 10.* A guilty conscience represents to the sinner a flaming sword turning every way, *Gen. iii. 24.* and himself inevitably running on it. Again, *ver. 23.* He knows that the day of darkness (or the night of darkness rather) is ready at his hand, that it is appointed to him, and cannot be put by; that it is hastening on apace,



and cannot be put off. This day of darkness is something beyond death, it is that day of the Lord which to all wicked people will be darkness and not light, and in which they will be doomed to utter endless darkness. Note, Some wicked people, though they seem secure, have already received the sentence of death, eternal death within themselves, and plainly see hell gaping for them. No marvel that it follows, *ver. 24.* Trouble and anguish (that inward tribulation and anguish of soul, spoken of *Rom. ii. 8, 9.* which is the effect of God's indignation and wrath fastening upon the conscience) shall make him afraid of worse to come. What is the hell before him, if this be the hell within him? And, though he would fain shake off his fears, drink them away and jest them away, it will not do; they shall prevail against him, and overpower him, as a king ready to the battle, which forces too strong to be resisted. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience.

(4.) If at any time he be in trouble he despairs of getting out, *ver. 22.* He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, but he gives himself up for gone and lost in an endless night. Good men expect light at evening-time, light out of darkness; but what reason have they to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble, who would not return from the darkness of sin, but went on in it? *Psal. lxxxii. 5.* It is the misery of damned sinners, that they know they shall never return out of that utter darkness, nor pass the gulph fixed.

(5.) He perplexeth himself with continual care, especially if providence never so little frown upon him, *ver. 23.* Such a dread he has of poverty, and such a waste doth he discern upon his estate, that he is already, in his own imagination, wandering abroad for bread, going a-begging for a meal's meat, and saying, *Where is it?* The rich man in his abundance cried out, *What shall I do?* *Luke xii. 17.* Perhaps he pretends fear of wanting as an excuse of his covetous practices, and justly may be brought to this extremity at last. We read of those who were full, but have hired out themselves for bread, *1 Sam. ii. 5.* which this sinner will not do; he cannot dig, he is too fat, *ver. 27.* but to beg he may well be ashamed. See *Psal. cix. 10.* David never saw the righteous so far forsaken as to beg their bread, for, verily, they shall be fed, by the charitable, unasked, *Psal. xxxvii. 3—25.* But the wicked want it, and cannot expect it should be readily given them: how should they find mercy that never shewed mercy?

2. His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence, and all his comfort, will come to an end with it. How can he prosper when God runs upon him? So some understand that, *ver. 26.* And, whom God runs upon, he will certainly run down; for, when he judgeth, he will overcome. See how the judgments of God cross this worldly wicked man in all his cares, desires, and projects, and so complete his misery.

(1.) He is in care to get, but he shall not be rich, *ver. 29.* His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich: he is not rich that has not enough, and he has not enough that doth not think he has: It is contentment only that is great gain. Providence remarkably keeps some from being rich, defeating their enterprises, breaking their measures, and keeping them always behind hand. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich; it goes as it comes, it is got by one sin and spent upon another.

(2.) He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain, his substance shall not continue: it will dwindle and come to nothing; God blasts it, and what came up in a night periseth in a night: *Wealth gotten by vanity will certainly be diminished.* Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of those estates which have been raised by oppression; however it goes with a curse to those that succeed. *De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius hæres.* He purchaseth estates to him and his heirs for ever, but to what purpose? he shall not prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth, neither the credit nor the comfort of his riches shall be prolonged; and, when those are gone, where is the perfection of them? How indeed can we expect the perfection of any thing to be prolonged upon the earth, where every thing is transitory, and we soon see the end of all perfection?

(3.) He is in care to leave what he has got and kept to his children after him; but in this he is crossed; the branches of his family shall perish, in whom he hoped to have lived and flourished, and to have had the reputation of making them all great men. *They shall not be green, ver. 32.* The flame shall dry them up, *ver. 30.* He shall shake them off as blossoms that never knit, or as the unripe grape, *ver. 33.* They shall die in the beginning of their days, and never come to maturity. Many a man's family is ruined by his iniquity.

(4.) He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed. (1.) He may perhaps be taken from it, *ver. 33.* By the breath of God's mouth, (i.e. by his wrath, which, like a stream of brimstone, kindles the fire that devours him, *Isa. xxx. 33.* or by his word, he speaks and it is done presently) shall he go away, and leave his wealth to others. *This night thy soul shall be required of thee; and so the wicked is driven away in his wickedness;* the worldling in his worldliness. (2.) It may perhaps be taken from him, and fly away like an eagle towards heaven: *It shall be accomplished (or cut off) before his time, ver. 32.* i.e. He shall survive his prosperity, and see himself stripped of it.

(5.) He is in care, when he is in trouble, how to get out of it (not how to get good by it); but in this also he is crossed, *ver. 30.* He shall not depart out of darkness; when he begins to fall, like *Humam*, down with him. It was said of him, *ver. 22.* He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness; he frightened himself with the perpetuity of his calamity, and God also shall choose his delusions, and bring his fears upon him, *Isa. lvi. 4.* as he did upon *Israel*, *Numb. xiv. 28.* God saith Amen to his distrust and despair.

(6.) He is in care to secure his partners, and hopes to secure himself by his partnership with them; but that is in vain too, *ver. 34, 35.* The congregation of them, the whole confederacy, they, and all their tabernacles, shall be desolate, and consumed with fire. Hypocrisy and bribery are here charged upon them; i.e. deceitful dealing both with God and man; God affronted under colour of religion, man wronged under colour of justice. It is impossible these should end well: *Though hand join in hand for the support of these perfidious practices, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished.*

3. The use and application of all this. Will the prosperity of presumptuous sinners end at last thus miserably? then, *ver. 31.* Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity. Let others harms be our warnings, and let not us rest on that broken reed, which always failed those that leaned on it. (1.) Those, that trust to their sinful ways of getting wealth, trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompence, for they shall not get what they expected: their arts will deceive them, and perhaps ruin them in this world. (2.) Those that trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, trust in vanity, for it will yield them no satisfaction: the guilt, that cleaves to it, will ruin the joy of it: they sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind; and will own at length, with the utmost confusion, that a deceived heart turned them aside, and they cheated themselves with a lie in their right hand.

## C H A P. XVI.

This chapter begins Job's reply to that discourse of Eliphaz which we had in the foregoing chapter; and it is but the second part of the same song of lamentation, with which he had before bemoaned himself, and to the same melancholy tune. (1.) He upbraids his friends with their unkind usage of him, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) He represents his own case as very deplorable upon all accounts, *ver. 6, 16.* (3.) He still holds fast his integrity, concerning which he appeals to God's righteous judgment from the unrighteous censures of his friends, *ver. 17—22.*

1. THEN Job answered and said, 2. I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. 3. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? 4. I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. 5. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

Both Job and his friends took the same way that disputants commonly take, which is to undervalue one another's sense, and wisdom, and management. The law of contention, the longer it is drawn the hotter it grows, and the beginning of this sort of strife is as the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. Eliphaz had represented Job's discourses as idle and unprofitable, and nothing to the purpose, and Job here gives his the same character. Those, who are free in passing such censures, must expect to have them retorted; it is easy, it is endless; but *cui bono?* What good doth it do? It will stir up mens passions, but will never convince their judgments, nor set truth in a clear light.

Job here reproves Eliphaz,

1. For needless repetitions, *ver. 2.* I have heard many such things. You tell me nothing but what I knew before; nothing but what you yourselves have before said; you offer nothing new; it is the same thing over and over again; which Job thinks as great a trial of his patience as almost any of his troubles. The inculcating of the same things thus by an adversary is indeed provoking and nauseous, but by a teacher it is often necessary, and must not be grievous to the learner, to whom precept must be upon precept, and line upon line: many things we have heard which it is good for us to hear again, that we may understand and remember them better, and be more affected with them, and influenced by them.

2. For unskillful applications. They came with a design to comfort him, but they went about it very awkwardly, and, when they touched Job's case, quite mistook it; *miserable comforters are ye all!* that, instead of offering any thing to alleviate the affliction, add affliction to it, and make it yet more grievous. The patient's case is sad indeed, when his medicines are poisons, and his physicians his worst disease. What Job saith here of his friends is true of all creatures in comparison with God, and one time or other we shall be made to see it, and own it, that miserable comforters are they all. When we are under convictions of sin, terrors of conscience, and the arrests of death, it is only the blessed Spirit that can comfort effectually, all others without him do it miserably, and sing songs to a heavy heart to no purpose.

3. For endless impertinence. Job wisteth that vain words might have an end, *ver. 3.* And, if they be vain, it were well they were never begun, and the sooner they are ended the better. Those, who are so wise as to speak to the purpose, will be so wise as to know when they have said enough of a thing, and when it is time to break off.

4. For causeless obstinacy. What emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? It is a great piece of confidence, and unaccountable, with Eliphaz, to charge men with those crimes which we cannot prove upon them; to pass a judgment on men's spiritual state, upon the view of their outward condition, and to re-advance those objections which have been again and again answered.

5. For the violation of the sacred laws of friendship, doing by his brother as he would not have been done by, one as his brother would not have done by him. This is a cutting reproof, and very affecting, *ver. 4, 5.*

1. He desires his friends, in imagination, for a little while to change conditions with him, to put their souls in his soul's stead; to suppose themselves in misery like him, and him at ease like them; and it is no absurd or foreign supposition, but what might quickly become true in fact; so strange, so sudden, many times, are the vicissitudes of human affairs, and such the turns of the wheel, that the spokes soon change places. Whatever our brethren's sorrows are, we ought by sympathy to make them our own, because we know not how soon they may be so.

2. He represents the unkindness of their carriage towards him, by shewing what he could do to them if they were in his condition. I could speak as ye do. It is an easy thing to trample upon those that are down, and to find fault with what those say that are in extremity of pain and affliction. I could heap up words against you as you do against me, and how would you like it? how would you bear it?

2. He shews them what they should do, by telling them what in that case he would do, *ver. 5.* I would strengthen you, and say all I could to assuage your grief, but nothing to aggravate it. It is natural to sufferers to think what they would do, if the tables were turned; but perhaps our hearts may deceive us, we know not what we would do: we find it easier to discern the reasonableness and importance of a command, when we have occasion to claim the benefit of it, than when we have occasion to do the duty of it. See what is the duty we owe to our brethren in affliction. (1.) We should say and do all we can to strengthen them, suggesting to them such considerations as are proper to encourage their confidence in God and to support their sinking spirits. Faith and patience are the strength of the afflicted; what helps these graces confirms the feeble knees. (2.) To assuage their grief, the causes of their grief, if possible: or, however, their resentment of those causes. Good words cost nothing, but they may be of good service to those that are in sorrow, not only as it is some comfort to them to see their friends concerned for them, but they may be so minded of that which, through the prevalency of grief, was forgotten. Though hard words (we say) break no bones, yet kind words may help to make broken bones rejoice; and those have the tongue of the learned that know how to speak a word in season to the weary.

6. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased? 7. But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company,



pany. 8. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me: and my leanness, rising up in me, beareth witness to my face. 9. He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth: mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. 10. They have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully, they have gathered themselves together against me. 11. God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. 12. I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark. 13. His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. 14. He breaketh me with breach upon breach; he runneth upon me like a giant. 15. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust. 16. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eye-lids is the shadow of death.

Job's complaint is here very bitter, as any where in all his discourses, and he is at a stand whether to smother it or to give it vent: sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, is a relief to the afflicted, according as the temper or the circumstances are, but Job found help by neither, *ver. 6.* (1.) Sometimes giving vent to grief gives ease, but *though I speak* (saith Job) *my grief is not assuaged*, my spirit is never the lighter for the pouring out of my complaint, nay, what I speak is so misconstrued as to be turned to the aggravation of my grief. (2.) At other times, keeping silence makes the trouble the easier and the sooner forgot, but (saith Job) *though I forbear* I am never the nearer, *what am I eased?* If he complained, he was censured as passionate; if not, as sullen: if he maintained his integrity, that was his crime; if he made no answer to their accusations, his silence was taken for a confession of his guilt.

Here is a doleful remonstrance of Job's grievances: O what reason have we to bless God that we are not making such complaints here! He complains,

1. That his family was scattered, *ver. 7.* *He made me weary*, weary of speaking, weary of forbearing, weary of my friends, weary of life itself: my journey through the world proves so very uncomfortable that I am quite tired with it; and this made it as tiresome as any thing, that all his company was made desolate; his children and servants killed, and the poor remains of his great household dispersed. The company of good people, that used to meet at his house for religious worship, was now scattered, and he spent his sabbaths in silence and solitude. He had company indeed, but such as he would rather have been without, for they seemed to triumph in his desolation. If lovers and friends are put far from us, we must see and own God's hand in it, making our company desolate.

2. That his body was worn away with diseases and pains, so that he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, *ver. 8.* His face was furrowed, not with age, but sickness: *Thou hast filled me with wrinkles.* His flesh was wasted with the running of his sore bites, so that his leanness rose up in him, i. e. his bones, that were not seen, stuck out, *chap. xxxiii. 21.* These are called witnesses against him, witnesses of God's displeasure against him, and such witnesses as his friends produced against him to prove him a wicked man. Or, they are witnesses for me, that my complaint is not causeless, or, witnesses to me, that I am a dying man, and must be gone shortly.

3. That his enemy was a terror to him, threatened him, frightened him, looked stern upon him, and gave all the indications of rage against him, *ver. 9.* *He tears me in his wrath.* But who is this enemy? Either, (1.) Eliphaz, who shewed himself very much exasperated against him, and perhaps had expressed himself with such marks of indignation as are here mentioned: however, what he said tore Job's good name, and thundered nothing but terror to him: his eyes were sharpened to spy out matter of reproach against Job, and very barbarously both he and the rest of them used him. Or, (2.) Satan: he was his enemy that hated him, and, perhaps by the divine permission, terrified him with apparitions as (some think) he terrified our Saviour, which put him into his agonies in the garden; and thus he aimed to make him curse God. It is not improbable, that this is the enemy he means. Or, (3.) God himself: If we understand it of him, the expressions are indeed as rash as any he used: God hates none of his creatures, but Job's melancholy did thus represent to him the terrors of the Almighty; and nothing can be more grievous to a good man than to apprehend God to be his enemy. If the wrath of a king be as messengers of death, what is the wrath of the King of kings!

4. That all about him were abusive to him, *ver. 10.* They came upon him with open mouth to devour him, as if they would swallow him alive; so terrible were their threats, and so scornful was their carriage to him. They did him all the indignities they could invent, and even smote him on the cheek; and herein many were confederate; they gathered themselves together against him, even the abjects, *Psal. xxxv. 15.* Herein Job was a type of Christ, as many of the ancients make him; these very expressions are used in the predictions of his sufferings, *Psal. xxii. 13.* *They gaped upon me with their mouths;* and *Micah v. 1.* *They shall smile the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek;* which was literally fulfilled, *Matt. xxvi. 67.* How were they increased that troubled him!

5. That God, instead of delivering him out of their hands, as he hoped, delivered him into their hands, *ver. 11.* *He had turned me over into the hands of the wicked.* They could have had no power against him if it had not been given them from above; he therefore looks beyond them to God, who gave them their commission, as David did when Shimei cursed him: but he thinks it strange, and almost thinks it hard, that those should have power against him who were God's enemies as much as his: but God sometimes makes use of wicked men as his sword to one another, *Psal. xvii. 13.* and his rod to his own children, *Isa. x. 5.* Herein also Job was a type of Christ, who was delivered into wicked hands to be crucified and slain by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, *Acts ii. 23.*

6. That God not only delivered him into the hands of the wicked; but took him into his own hands too, into which it is a fearful thing to fall, *ver. 12.* I was at ease in the comfortable enjoyments of the gift of God's bounty; not fretting and uneasiness, as some are in the midst of their prosperity, who thereby provoke God to strip them: yet he has broken me asunder, put me upon the rack of pain, and tore me limb from limb. God in afflicting him had seemed, (1.) As if he were furious: though fury is not in God, he thought it was, when he took him by the neck (as a strong man in a passion would take a child) and shook him to pieces, triumphing in the irresistible power he had to do what he would with him. (2.) As if he

were partial: he hath distinguished me from the rest of mankind by this hard usage of me; he hath set me up for his mark, the butt at which he is pleased to let fly all his arrows: at me they are directed, and they come not by chance; against me they are levelled, as if I were the greatest sinner of all the men in the east, or were singled out to be made an example. When God set him up for a mark, his archers presently compassed him round. God has archers at command, who will be sure to hit the mark that he sets up. Whoever are our enemies, we must look upon them as God's archers, and see him directing the arrow. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* (3.) As if he were cruel, and his wrath as relentless as his power was resistless. As if he contrived to touch him in the tenderest part, cleaving his reins asunder with acute pains; perhaps they were nephritic pains, those of the stone, which lie in the region of the kidneys. As if he had no mercy in reserve for him, he doth not spare, nor abate any thing of the extremity: and, as if he aimed at nothing but his death, and his death in the midst of the most grievous tortures, "he pours out my gall upon the ground." As when men have taken a wild beast and killed it, they open it, and pour out the gall with a loathing of it. He thought his blood was poured out, as if it were not only not precious but nauseous. (4.) As if he were unreasonable and insatiable in his executions, *ver. 14.* *He breaketh me with breach upon breach,* follows me with one wound after another. So his troubles came at first; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking another came; and so it was still, new bites were rising every day, so that he had no prospect of the end of his troubles: thus he thought God ran upon him like a giant, whom he could not possibly stand before or confront: as the giants of old ran down all their poor neighbours, and were quite too hard for them. Note, Even good men, when they are in great and extraordinary troubles, have much ado not to entertain hard thoughts of God.

7. That he had divested himself of all his honour and all his comfort, in compliance with the surprising providences that were concerning him. Some can lessen their own troubles by concealing them, holding their heads as high, and putting as good a face upon it, as ever; but Job could not do so; he received the impressions of them, and, as one truly penitent, and truly patient, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, *ver. 15, 16.* (1.) He now laid aside all his ornaments and soft clothing, consulted not either his ease or finery in his dress, but sewed sackcloth upon his skin; that clothing he thought good enough for such a defiled distempered body as he had. Silks upon sores, such sores, he thought would be disagreeable; sackcloth would be more becoming. Those are fond indeed of gay clothing that will not be weaned from it by sickness and old age, and as Job was, *ver. 8.* by wrinkles and leanness. He not only put on sackcloth, but sewed it on, as one that resolved to continue his humiliation as long as the affliction continued. (2.) He insisted not upon any points of honour, but humbled himself under humbling providences; he defiled his horn in the dust, and refused the respects that used to be paid to his dignity, power, and eminency. Note, When God brings down our condition, that should bring down our spirits. Better lay the horn in the dust than lift it up in contradiction to the designs of providence, and have it broken at last. Eliphaz had represented Job as high and haughty, and unhumiliated under his affliction; no, saith Job, I know better things; the dust is now the fittest place for me. (3.) He banished mirth as utterly unreasonable, and set himself to sow in tears, *ver. 16.* *My face is foul with weeping* so constantly for my sins, for God's displeasure against me, and for my friends unkindness; this has brought a shadow of death upon my eye lids. He had not only wept away all his beauty, but almost wept his eyes out. In this also he was a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and much in tears, and pronounced those blessed that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

17. Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure. 18. O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place! 19. Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. 20. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God. 21. O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour! 22. When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

Job's condition was very deplorable, but had he nothing to support him? nothing to comfort him? Yes; and he here tells us what it was.

1. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had walked uprightly, and had never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready than he to acknowledge his sins of infirmity; but upon search he could not charge himself with any enormous crime, for which he should be made more miserable than other men, *ver. 17.* He had kept conscience void of offence, (1.) Towards men: *Not for any injustice in my hands;* any wealth that I have unjustly got or kept. Eliphaz had represented him as a tyrant and an oppressor: No, saith he, I never did any wrong to any man, but always despised the gain of oppression. (2.) Towards God. Also my prayer is pure, which it cannot be as long as there is *injustice in our hands*, *Isa. i. 15.* Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in religion, but he instanteth in prayer the great act of religion, and professeth that in that he was pure, though not from all infirmity, yet from reigning and allowed guile: it was not like the prayers of the Pharisees, who looked no farther than to be seen of men, and to serve a turn.

This assertion of his own integrity he backs with a solemn imprecation of shame and confusion to himself if it were not true, *ver. 18.* (1.) If there were any in justice in his hands, he wishes it might not be concealed, *O earth cover not thou my blood!* i. e. the innocent blood of others, which I am suspected to have shed. Murder will out; and let it, saith Job, if I have ever been guilty of it, *Gen. iv. 10, 11.* The day is coming, when the earth shall disclose her blood, *Isa. xxvi. 21.* and a good man is far from dreading that day. (2.) If there were any impurity in his prayers, he wisheth they might not be accepted; *let my cry have no place.* He was willing to be judged by that rule, *if I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me*, *Psal. lxxvi. 12.* There is another probable sense of these words; that he doth hereby, as it were, lay his death upon his friends, who broke his heart with their harsh censures, and chargeth the guilt of his blood upon them, begging of God to avenge it, and that the cry of his blood might have no place in which to lie hid, but might come up to heaven, and be heard by him that makes inquisition for blood.

2. He could appeal to God's omniscience concerning his integrity, *ver. 19.* The witness in our own bosoms for us will stand us in little stead if we have not a witness in heaven for us too; for *God is greater than our hearts,* and we are not to be our own judges: this therefore is Job's triumph, *my witness is in heaven.* Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to a good man, when he lies under the censure of his brethren, that there is a God in heaven who knows his integrity, and will clear it up sooner or later. See *John v. 31—37.* This one witness is instead of a thousand.

3. He had a God to go to, before whom he might unboast himself, *ver.*



ver. 20, 21. See here, (1.) How the case stood between him and his friends; he knew not how to be free with them, nor could he expect either a fair hearing with them or fair dealing from them: my friends (so they call themselves) scorn me, they set themselves not only to oppose me but to expose me; they are of counsel against me, and use all their art and eloquence (so the word signifies) to run me down. The scorn of friends are more cutting than those of enemies, but we must expect them; and provide accordingly. (2.) How it stood between him and God. He doubted not but that (1.) God did now take cognisance of his sorrows. *Mine eye pours out tears to God.* He had said, ver. 16. that he wept much; here he tells us in what channel his tears ran, and which way they were directed: his sorrow was not that of the world; but he sorrowed after a godly sort, wept before the Lord, and offered to him the sacrifice of a broken heart. Note, Even tears, when sanctified to God, give ease to troubled spirits; and, if men slight our grief, this may comfort us, that God regards them. (2.) That he would in due time clear up his innocency, ver. 21. *O that one might plead for a man with God!* If he could but now have the same freedom at God's bar that men commonly have at the bar of the civil magistrate, he doubted not but to carry his cause, for the Judge himself was a witness to his integrity. The language of this wish is that, *I will. l. 7, 8. I know that I shall not be ashamed, for he is near that justifies me.* Some give a gospel sense of this verse, and the original will very well bear it: *and he will plead, (i. e. there is one that will plead) for man with God, even the Son of Man, for his friend or neighbour.* Those who pour out tears before God, though they cannot plead for themselves by reason of their distance and defects, have a friend to plead for them, even the Son of man; and on this we must bottom all our hopes of acceptance with God.

4. He had a prospect of death which would put a period to all his troubles: such confidence had he towards God, that he could take pleasure in thinking of the approach of death, when he should be determined to his everlasting state, as one that doubted not but it would be well with him then: *when a few years are come, the years of number, which are determined and appointed to me, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.* Note, (1.) To die is to go the way whence we shall not return; it is to go a journey, a long journey, a journey for good and all: to remove from this to another country, from the world of sense to the world of spirits: it is a journey to our long home; there will be no coming back to our state in this world, nor any change of our state in the other world. 2. We must all of us very certainly and very shortly go this journey; and it is comfortable to those who keep a good conscience to think of it, for it is the crown of their integrity.

## C H A P. XVII.

In this chapter (1.) Job reflects upon the harsh censures which his friends had passed upon him; and, looking upon himself as a dying man, ver. 1. he appeals to God, and begs of him speedily to appear for him and right him, because they had wronged him, and he knew not how to right himself, ver. 2—7. but hopes, though it be a surprise, it will be no stumbling-block to good people to see him thus abused, ver. 8, 9. (2.) He reflects upon the vain hopes they had fed him with, that he should yet see good days, shewing that his days were just at an end, and, with his body, all his hopes would be buried in the dust, ver. 10—16. His friends becoming strange to him, which greatly grieved him, he makes death and the grave familiar to him, which yielded him some comfort.

1. **M**Y breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me. 2. Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eyes continue in their provocation? 3. Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me? 4. For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them. 5. He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail. 6. He hath made me also a byword of the people, and aforetime I was as a tabret. 7. Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow. 8. Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. 9. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Job's discourse here is somewhat broken and interrupted, and he passeth suddenly from one thing to another, as is usual with men in trouble: but we may reduce what is said here to three heads.

1. The deplorable condition which poor Job was now in, which he describes, to aggravate the great unkindness of his friends to him, and to justify his own complaints. Let us see what his case was.

(1.) He was a dying man, ver. 1. He had said, chap. xvi. 22. *When a few years are come I shall go that long journey.* But here he corrects himself; what do I talk of years to come? alas, I am just setting out on that journey, am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; my breath is already corrupt, or broken off, my spirits are spent: I am a gone man. It is good for every one of us thus to look upon ourselves as dying, and especially to think of it when we are sick. We are dying; that is, (1.) Our life is going, for the breath of life is going. It is continually going forth, it is in our nostrils, Isa. li. 22. the door at which it entered, Gen. ii. 7. there it is upon the threshold ready to depart. Perhaps Job's distemper obstructed his breathing, and short breath will be no breath after a while. Let the anointed of the Lord be the breath of our nostrils, and let us get spiritual life breathed into us; and that breath will never be corrupted. (2.) Our time is ending. *My days are extinct, are put out as a candle,* which from the first lighting is continually wasting and burning down, and will by degrees burn out of itself, but may by a thousand accidents be extinguished. Such is life. It concerns us therefore carefully to redeem the days of time, and to spend them in getting ready for the days of eternity, which will never be extinct. (3.) We are expected in our long home. *The graves are ready for me.* But would not one grave serve? yes, but he speaks of the sepulchres of his fathers, to which he must be gathered: the graves where they are laid are ready for me also. Graves in comfort; the congregation of the dead. Wherever we go there is but a step between us and the grave. Whatever is unready, that is ready: it is a bed soon made. If the graves be ready for us, it concerns us to be ready for the graves. *The graves for me,* so it runs; nothing not only his expectation of death but his desire of it; I have done with the world, and have nothing now to wish for but a grave.

(2.) He was a despised man, ver. 6. He (i. e. Eliphaz, so some, or rather God, whom he all along acknowledgeth to be the author of his calamities) has made me a by-word of the people, the talk of the country, a laughing-stock to many, a gazing-stock to all, and aforetime, or, to men's faces; publicly I was as a tabret, that who would might play upon; they made ballads of him: his name became a proverb; it is so still, *as poor as Job.* He has now made me a by-word, a reproach of men, whereas aforetime, in my prosperity, I was as a tabret, the darling of the country. (*Deliciae humani generis*), whom they were all pleased with. It is common for those who were honoured in their wealth to be despised in their poverty.

(3.) He was a man of sorrows, ver. 7. He wept so much that he had almost lost his sight; *mine eye is dim by reason of sorrow,* chap. xvi. 17. The sorrow of the world thus works darkness and death. He vexed so much, that he had fretted all the flesh off his back, and was become a perfect anatomy, a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones; *all my members are as a shadow.* I am grown so poor and thin, that I am not to be called a man, but the shadow of a man.

2. The ill use which his friends made of his miseries: they trampled upon him, and insulted over him, and condemned him as a hypocrite, because he was thus grievously afflicted. Hard usage! Now observe,

(1.) How Job describes it, and what contradiction he puts upon their discourses with him. He looks upon himself as basely abused by them.

(1.) They abused him with their foul censures, condemning him as an ill man, justly reduced thus, and exposed to contempt, ver. 2. They are mockers, that deride my calamities, and insult over me, because I am thus brought low. They are so with me, abusing me to my face, pretending friendship in their visit, but intending mischief. I cannot get clear of them; they are continually tearing me, and they will not be wrought upon, either by reason or pity, to let fall the prosecution. (2.) They abused him too with their fair promises; for in them they did but banter him. Hereckous them, ver. 5. among those that speak flattery to their friends. They all came to mourn with him, Eliphaz began with a commendation of him, chap. iv. 3. They had all promised him how happy he should be if he would take their advice: now all this he looked upon as flattery, and designed to vex him so much the more. All this he calls their provocation, ver. 2. They did what they could to provoke him, and then condemned him for his resentment of it; but he thinks himself excusable when his eye continued thus in their provocation; it never ceased, and he could never look off it. Note, The unkindness of those that trample upon their friends in affliction, that banter and abuse them then, is enough to try, if not tire, the patience even of Job himself.

(2.) How he condemns it. (1.) It was a sign that God had hid his heart from understanding, ver. 4. and that in this manner they were infuriated, and their wanted wisdom was departed from them. Wisdom is a gift of God, which he grants to some and withholds from others; grants at some times, and withholds at other times. Those, that are void of compassion, are so far void of understanding. Where there is not the tenderness of a man, one may question whether there be the understanding of a man. (2.) It would be a lasting reproach and diminution to them; therefore shalt thou not exalt them. Those are certainly kept back from honour, whose hearts are hid from understanding. When God bestows men, he will abate them. Sure, they, who discover so little acquaintance with the methods of providence, shall not have the honour of deciding this controversy! That is reserved for a man of better sense and better temper, such an one as Elihu afterwards appeared to be. (3.) It would entail a curse upon their families. He, that thus violates the sacred laws of friendship, forfeits the benefit of it, not only for himself but for his posterity. *Even the eyes of his children shall fail;* and, when they look for succour and comfort from their own and their fathers' friends, they shall look in vain, as I have done, and be as much disappointed as I am in you. Note, Those that wrong their neighbours, may prove to wrong their own children more than they are aware of.

(3.) How he appeals from them to God, ver. 4. Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee, i. e. Let me be assured that God will take the hearing and determining of the cause into his own hands, and I desire no more. Let some or other engage for God to bring on this matter. Thus they, whose hearts condemn them not, have confidence towards God, and can with humble and believing boldness beg of him to search and try them. Some make Job here to glance upon the mediation of Christ, for he speaks of a surety with God, without whom he durst not appear before God, nor try his cause at his bar; for, though his friends' accusations of him were utterly false, yet he could not justify himself before God but in a mediator. Our English annotations give this reading of the verse: *Appoint, I pray thee, my surety with thee, viz. Christ, who is with thee in heaven, and hath undertaken to be my surety, let him plead my cause and stand up for me, and who is he then that will strike upon mine hand? i. e. who dares then contend with me? who shall lay any thing to my charge, if Christ be an advocate for me? Rom. viii. 32, 33. Christ is the surety of the better testament, Heb. vii. 22: a surety of God's appointing; and, if he undertake for us, we need not fear what can be done against us.*

3. The good use which the righteous should make of Job's afflictions, both from God, from his enemies, and from his friends, ver. 8, 9. Observe here,

(1.) How the saints are described. (1.) They are upright men, honest and sincere, and that act from a steady principle, with a single eye. This was Job's own character, chap. i. 1. and probably he speaks of such upright men especially as had been his intimates and associates. (2.) They are the innocent; not perfectly so, but it is what they aim at and press towards. Sincerity is evangelical innocency, and they that are upright are said to be *innocent from the great transgression*, Psal. xix. 13. (3.) They are the righteous; who walk in the way of righteousness. (4.) They have clean hands, kept clean from the gross pollution of sin, and, when spotted with infirmities, washed with innocency, Psal. xxvi. 6.

(2.) How they should be affected with the account of Job's troubles: great enquiry, no doubt, would be made concerning him, and every one would speak of him and his case, and what use will good people make of it?

1. It will amaze them. *Upright men shall be astonished at this,* they will wonder to hear that so good a man as Job should be so grievously afflicted both in body, name, and estate; that God should lay his hand so heavy upon him, and that his friends, who ought to have comforted him, should add to his grief; that such a remarkable saint should be such a remarkable sufferer, and so useful a man laid aside in the midst of his usefulness; what shall we say to these things? Upright men, though satisfied in general that God is wise and holy in all he doth, yet cannot but be astonished at such dispensations of providence; paradoxes which will not be unfolded till the mystery of God shall be finished.

2. It will animate them. Instead of being deterred from, and discouraged in, the service of God, by the hard usage which this faithful servant of God met with, they shall be so much the more emboldened to proceed and persevere in it. That which was St. Paul's care, 1 Thess. iii. 3. was Job's, that no good man should be moved either from his holiness or his comfort.



comfort by these afflictions, that none should for the sake hereof think the worse of the ways or work of God. And that which was St. Paul's comfort was his too, that the brethren of the Lord would wax confident by his bonds, Phil. i. 14. They would hereby be animated,

(1.) To oppose sin, and to confront the corrupt and pernicious inferences which evil men would draw from Job's sufferings, as that God has forsaken the earth, that it is in vain to serve him, and the like, *the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite*, will not bear to hear this (Rev. ii. 2.), but shall withstand him to his face; will stir up himself to search into the meaning of such providences, and study these hard chapters, that he may read them readily; will stir up himself to maintain religion's just, but injured, cause, against all its opposers. Note, the boldness of the attacks, which profane people make upon religion, should sharpen the courage and resolution of its friends and advocates. It is time to stir when proclamation is made in the gate of the camp. Who is on the Lord's side? When vice is daring, it is no time for virtue to be sneaking.

(2.) To persevere in religion. The righteous, instead of drawing back, or so much as starting back, at this frightful spectacle, or standing still to deliberate whether he should proceed or not (allude to 2 Sam. ii. 23), shall with so much more constancy and resolution hold on his way and press forward. Though in me he foresees bonds and afflictions abide him, yet none of those things shall move him, Acts xx. 24. Those, who keep their eye upon heaven as their end, will keep their feet in the paths of religion as their way, whatever difficulties and discouragements they meet with in it.

(3.) In order thereunto, to grow in grace. He will not only hold on his way notwithstanding, but will grow stronger and stronger, and, by the sight of other good men's trials and experience of his own, he will be made more vigorous and lively in his duty, more warm and affectionate, more resolute and undaunted, and, the worse others, are the better he will be: that, which disuays others, heartens him. The blustering wind makes the traveller gather his cloak the closer about him and gird it the faster. They, that are truly wise and good, will be continually growing wiser and better. Proficiency in religion is a good sign of sincerity in it.

10. But, as for you all, do you return, and come now; for I cannot find one wise man among you. 11. My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. 12. They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness. 13. If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. 14. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. 15. And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it? 16. They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.

Job's friends had pretended to comfort him with the hopes of his return to a prosperous estate again: now he here shews,

1. That it was their folly to talk so, ver. 10. Return and come now, he convinced that you are in an error, and let me persuade you to be of my mind for I cannot find one wise man among you, that knows how to explain the difficulties of God's providence, or how to apply the consolations of his promises. Those do not go wisely about the work of comforting the afflicted, who fetch their comforts from the possibility of their recovery and enlargement in this world, though that is not to be despised of, but at the best it is uncertain, and if it should fail, as perhaps it may, the comfort built upon it may fail too: it is therefore our wisdom to comfort ourselves and others in distress with that which will not fail, the promise of God, his love and grace, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life.

2. That it would be much more his folly to heed them; for, 1. All his measures were already broken and he was full of confusion, ver. 11, 12. He owns he had in his prosperity often pleased himself both with projects of what he should do and prospects of what he should enjoy; but now he looked upon his days as past and drawing towards a period: all those purposes were broken off, and those expectations dashed. He had thoughts about enlarging his border, increasing his stock, and settling his children, and many pious thoughts, it is likely, of promoting religion in his country, redressing grievances, reforming the profane, relieving the poor, and raising funds perhaps for charitable uses; but all these thoughts of his heart were now at an end, and he should never have the satisfaction of seeing his designs effected. Note, The period of our days will be the period of all our contrivances and hopes for this world; but, if with full purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord, death will not break off that purpose.

Job, being thus put upon new counsels, was under a constant uneasiness, ver. 13. The thoughts of his heart being broken, they changed the night into day, and shortened the light. Some in their vanity and riot turn night into day and day into night, but Job did so through trouble and anguish of spirit, which was a hindrance, (1.) To the repose of the night, keeping his eyes waking, so that the night was as wearisome to him as the day, and the toils of the night tired him as much as the toils of the day. (2.) To the entertainments of the day: the light of the morning is welcome, but, by reason of this inward darkness, the comfort of it is soon gone, and the day is to me as dismal as the black and dark night, Deut. xxviii. 67. See what reason we have to be thankful for that health and ease which enable us to welcome both the shadows of the evening and the light of the morning.

2. All his expectations from this world would very shortly be buried in the grave with him; so that it was a jest for him to think of such mighty things as they had flattered him with the hopes of, chap. iv. 19.—viii. 21.—xi. 17. Alas, you do but make a fool of me!

1. He saw himself just dropping into the grave. A convenient house, an easy bed, and agreeable relations, are some of those things which we take satisfaction in in this world: Job expected not any of these above ground; all he felt, and all he had in view, was unpleasant and disagreeable, but under ground he expected them.

(1.) He counted upon no house but the grave, ver. 13. If I wait, if there be any place where I shall ever be easy again, it must be in the grave: I should deceive myself if I should count upon any outlet from my trouble but what death will give me: nothing so sure as that. Note, In all our prosperity it is good to keep death in prospect: whatever we expect, let us be sure to expect that; for that may prevent other things we expect, but nothing will prevent that. But see how he endeavours not only to reconcile himself to the grave, but to recommend it to himself; it is my house. The grave is a house; to the wicked it is a prison-house, Job. xxiv. 12, 20. To the godly it is (Bethabara) a passage-house in their way home: it is my house, mine by descent, I am born to it; it is my father's house; mine by purchase; I have made myself obnoxious to it. We must every

one of us shortly remove to this house, and it is our wisdom to provide accordingly; let us think of sitting, and send before to our long home.

(2.) He counted upon no quiet bed but in the darkness: there, faith he, I have made my bed. It is made, for it is ready, and I am just going to it. The grave is a bed; for we shall rest in it in the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the morning of our ever-lasting day, Isa. lviii. 2. Let this make good people willing to die; it is but going to bed; they are weary and sleepy, and it is time they were in their beds; why should they not go willingly when their Father calls? Nay, Nay, I have made my bed, by preparation for it: I have endeavoured to make it easy, by keeping conscience pure, by seeing Christ lying in this bed, and so turning it into a bed of spices, and by looking beyond it to the resurrection.

(3.) He counted upon no agreeable relations but what we had in the grave, ver. 14. I have cried to corruption, i. e. to the grave, where the body will corrupt, Thou art my father, for our bodies were formed out of the earth, and to the worms there, ye are my mother and my sister, to whom I am allied, for man is a worm, and with whom I must be conversant, for the worms shall cover us, Job. xxi. 26. Job complained that his children were estranged from him, chap. xix. 13, 14. therefore here he claims acquaintance with other relations that would stick to him when those disowned him. Note, 1. We are all of us near akin to corruption and the worms. 2. It is therefore good to make ourselves familiar with them, by conversing much with them in our thoughts and meditations, which would very much help us above the inordinate love of life and fear of death.

2. He saw all his hopes from this world dropping into the grave with him, ver. 15, 16. Seeing I must shortly leave the world, where is now my hope? How can I expect to prosper; who do not expect to live? He is not hopeless, but his hope is not there where they would have it be. If in this life only he had hope, he were of all men most miserable. No, as for my hope, that hope which I comfort and support myself with, who shall see it? It is something out of sight that I hope for; not things that are seen, that are temporal, but things not seen, that are eternal: what is his hope he will tell us, chap. xix. 23. Non est mortale quod opto, immortale peto. But as for the hopes you would buoy me up with, they shall go down with me to the bars of the pit; you are dying men, and cannot make good your promises; I am a dying man, and cannot enjoy the good you promise; seeing therefore our rest will be together in the dust, let us all lay aside the thoughts of this world, and set our hearts upon another. We must shortly be in the dust, for dust we are; dust and ashes in the pit, under the bars of the pit, held fast there, never to lose the bands of death till the general resurrection: but we shall rest there, we shall rest together there. Job and his friends could not agree now, but they will both be quiet in the grave; the dust of that will shortly stop their mouths, and put an end to the controversy; let the foresight of this cool the heat of all contenders, and moderate disputers of this world.

## C H A P. XVIII.

In this chapter Bildad makes a second assault upon Job. In his first discourse, chap. viii. he had given him encouragement to hope that all should yet be well with him; but here, not a word of that; he is grown more peevish, and is so far from being convinced by Job's reasonings, that he is but more exasperated. (1.) He sharply reproves Job as haughty and passionate, and obstinate in his opinion, ver. 1—4. (2.) He enlargeth upon the doctrine he had before maintained, concerning the misery of wicked people, and the ruin that attends them, ver. 5—21. In which he seems all along to have an eye to Job's complaints of the miserable condition he was in; that he was in the dark, bewildered, ensnared, terrified, and hastening out of the world. Why this, saith Bildad, is the condition of a wicked man, and therefore thou art one.

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. How long will it be ere you make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak. 3. Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight? 4. He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?

Bildad here shoots his arrows, even bitter words, against poor Job, little thinking that, though he was a wise and good man, yet, in this instance, he was serving Satan's design, in adding to his affliction.

1. He charges him with idle, endless, talk, as Eliphaz had done, chap. xv. 2, 3. How long will it be, ere you make an end of words? ver. 2. Here he reflects not only upon Job himself, but either upon all the managers of the conference, thinking perhaps that Eliphaz and Zophar did not speak so close to the purpose as they might have done, or upon some that were present, who possibly took part with Job, and put in a word now and then in his favour, though it be not recorded. Bildad was weary of hearing others speak, and impatient till it came to his turn; which cannot be observed to any man's praise, for we ought to be swift to hear and slow to speak. It is common for contenders to monopolize the reputation of wisdom, and then to insist upon it as their privilege to be dictators. How unbecoming that is in others every one can see, but few that are guilty of it can see it in themselves. Time was when Job had the last word in all debates, chap. xxix. 22. After my words they spake not again: then he was in power and prosperity, but now he was impoverished and brought low; he could scarce be allowed to speak at all, and every thing he said was as much vilified as formerly it had been magnified: wisdom therefore (as the world goes) is good with an inheritance, Eccl. vii. 11. for the poor man's wisdom is despised, and, because he is poor, his words are not heard, Eccl. ix. 16.

2. With a regardlessness of what was said to him, intimated in that, Mark, and afterwards we will speak. And it is to no purpose to speak, though what is said be never so much to the purpose, if those to whom it is spoken will not mark and observe it. Let the ear be opened to hear as the learned, and then the tongues of the learned will do good service, Isai. l. 4. and not otherwise. It is an encouragement to those that speak of the things of God to see the hearers attentive.

3. With a haughty contempt and disdain of his friends, and of that which they offered. Ver. 3. Wherefore are we counted as beasts? This was invidious: Job had indeed called them mockers, had represented them both as unwise and as unkind, wanting both in the reason and tenderness of men; but he did not count them beasts; yet Bildad so represents it. (1.) Because his high spirit resented what Job had said, as if it had been the greatest affront imaginable. Proud men are apt to think themselves slighted more than really they are. (2.) Because his hot spirit was willing to find a pretence to be hard upon Job. Those, that incline to be severe upon others, will have it thought that they have first been so upon them.

4. With



and cannot be put off. This day of darkness is something beyond death, it is that day of the Lord which to all wicked people will be darkness and not light, and in which they will be doomed to utter endless darkness. Note. Some wicked people, though they seem secure, have already received the sentence of death, eternal death within themselves, and plainly see hell gaping for them. No marvel that it follows, *ver. 24.* Trouble and anguish (that inward tribulation and anguish of soul, spoken of *Rom. ii. 8, 9.* which is the effect of God's indignation and wrath fastening upon the conscience) shall make him afraid of worse to come. What is the hell before him, if this be the hell within him? And, though he would fain shake off his fears, drink them away and jest them away, it will not do; they shall prevail against him, and overpower him, as a king ready to the battle, which forces too strong to be resisted. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience.

(4.) If at any time he be in trouble he despairs of getting out, *ver. 22.* He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, but he gives himself up for gone and lost in an endless night. Good men expect light at evening-time, light out of darkness; but what reason have they to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble, who would not return from the darkness of sin, but went on in it? *Psal. lxxxii. 5.* It is the misery of damned sinners, that they know they shall never return out of that utter darkness, nor pass the gulph fixed.

(5.) He perplexeth himself with continual care, especially if providence never so little frown upon him, *ver. 23.* Such a dread he has of poverty, and such a waste doth he discern upon his estate, that he is already, in his own imagination, wandering abroad for bread, going a-begging for a meal's meat, and saying, *Where is it?* The rich man in his abundance cried out, *What shall I do?* *Luke xii. 17.* Perhaps he pretends fear of wanting as an excuse of his covetous practices, and justly may be brought to this extremity at last. We read of those who were full, but have hired out themselves for bread, *1 Sam. ii. 5.* which this sinner will not do; he cannot dig, he is too fat, *ver. 27.* but to beg he may well be ashamed. See *Psal. cix. 10.* David never saw the righteous so far forsaken as to beg their bread, for, verily, they shall be fed, by the charitable, unasked, *Psal. xxxvii. 3—25.* But the wicked want it, and cannot expect it should be readily given them: how should they find mercy that never shewed mercy?

2. His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence, and all his comfort, will come to an end with it. How can he prosper when God runs upon him? So some understand that, *ver. 26.* And, whom God runs upon, he will certainly run down; for, when he judgeth, he will overcome. See how the judgments of God cross this worldly wicked man in all his cares, desires, and projects, and so complete his misery.

(1.) He is in care to get, but he shall not be rich, *ver. 29.* His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich: he is not rich that has not enough, and he has not enough that doth not think he has: It is contentment only that is great gain. Providence remarkably keeps some from being rich, defeating their enterprises, breaking their measures, and keeping them always behind hand. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich; it goes as it comes, it is got by one sin and spent upon another.

(2.) He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain, his substance shall not continue: it will dwindle and come to nothing; God blights it, and what came up in a night perishest in a night: *Wealth gotten by vanity will certainly be diminished.* Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of those estates which have been raised by oppression; however it goes with a curse to those that succeed. *De male quasitis vix gaudet tertius haeres.* He purchaseth estates to him and his heirs for ever, but to what purpose? he shall not prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth, neither the credit nor the comfort of his riches shall be prolonged; and, when those are gone, where is the perfection of them? How indeed can we expect the perfection of any thing to be prolonged upon the earth, where every thing is transitory, and we soon see the end of all perfection?

(3.) He is in care to leave what he has got and kept to his children after him; but in this he is crossed; the branches of his family shall perish, in whom he hoped to have lived and flourished, and to have had the reputation of making them all great men. *They shall not be green, ver. 32. The flame shall dry them up, ver. 30.* He shall shake them off as blossoms that never knit, or as the unripe grape, *ver. 33.* They shall die in the beginning of their days, and never come to maturity. Many a man's family is ruined by his iniquity.

(4.) He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed. (1.) He may perhaps be taken from it, *ver. 33. By the breath of God's mouth,* (i. e. by his wrath, which, like a stream of brimstone, kindles the fire that devours him, *Iſa. xxx. 33.* or by his word, he speaks and it is done presently) shall he go away, and leave his wealth to others. *This night thy soul shall be required of thee; and so the wicked is driven away in his wickedness;* the worldling in his worldliness. (2.) It may perhaps be taken from him, and fly away like an eagle towards heaven: *It shall be accomplished (or cut off) before his time, ver. 32. i. e.* He shall survive his prosperity, and see himself stripped of it.

(5.) He is in care, when he is in trouble, how to get out of it (not how to get good by it); but in this also he is crossed, *ver. 30. He shall not depart out of darkness;* when he begins to fall, like Haman, down with him. It was said of him, *ver. 22. He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness;* he frightened himself with the perpetuity of his calamity, and God also shall choose his delusions, and bring his fears upon him, *Iſa. lxvi. 4.* as he did upon Israel, *Numb. xiv. 28.* God saith Amen to his distrust and despair.

(6.) He is in care to secure his partners, and hopes to secure himself by his partnership with them; but that is in vain too, *ver. 34, 35.* The congregation of them, the whole confederacy, they, and all their tabernacles, shall be desolate, and consumed with fire. Hypocrisy and bribery are here charged upon them; i. e. deceitful dealing both with God and man; God affronted under colour of religion, man wronged under colour of justice. It is impossible these should end well: *Though hand join in hand for the support of these perfidious practices, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished.*

3. The use and application of all this. Will the prosperity of presumptuous sinners end at last thus miserably? then, *ver. 31. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity.* Let others learn by our warnings, and let not us rest on that broken reed, which always failed those that leaned on it. (1.) Those, that trust to their sinful ways of getting wealth, *trust in vanity,* and *vanity will be their recompence,* for they shall not get what they expected: their arts will deceive them, and perhaps ruin them in this world. (2.) Those that trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, *trust in vanity,* for it will yield them no satisfaction: the guilt, that cleaves to it, will ruin the joy of it: they sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind; and will own at length, with the utmost confusion, that a *deceivèd heart turned them aside,* and they cheated themselves with a lie in their right hand.

## C H A P. XVI.

This chapter begins Job's reply to that discourse of Eliphaz which we had in the foregoing chapter; and it is but the second part of the same song of lamentation, with which he had before bemoaned himself, and to the same melancholy tune. (1.) He upbraids his friends with their unkind usage of him, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) He represents his own case as very deplorable upon all accounts, *ver. 6, 16.* (3.) He still holds fast his integrity, concerning which he appeals to God's righteous judgment from the unrighteous censures of his friends, *ver. 17—22.*

1. THEN Job answered and said, 2. I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. 3. Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest? 4. I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. 5. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.

Both Job and his friends took the same way that disputants commonly take, which is to undervalue one another's sense, and wisdom, and management. The law of contention, the longer it is drawn the hotter it grows, and the beginning of this sort of strife is as the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. Eliphaz had represented Job's discourses as idle and unprofitable, and nothing to the purpose, and Job here gives him the same character. Those, who are free in passing such censures, must expect to have them retorted; it is easy, it is endless; but *cui bono?* What good doth it do? It will stir up mens' passions, but will never convince their judgments, nor set truth in a clear light.

Job here reproves Eliphaz,

1. For needless repetitions, *ver. 2. I have heard many such things.* You tell me nothing but what I knew before; nothing but what you yourselves have before said; you offer nothing new; it is the same thing over and over again; which Job thinks as great a trial of his patience as almost any of his troubles. The inculcating of the same things thus by an adversary is indeed provoking and nauseous, but by a teacher it is often necessary, and must not be grievous to the learner, to whom *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line;* many things we have heard which it is good for us to hear again, that we may understand and remember them better, and be more affected with them, and influenced by them.

2. For unskillful applications. They came with a design to comfort him, but they went about it very awkwardly, and, when they touched Job's case, quite mistook it; *miserable comforters are ye all!* that, instead of offering any thing to alleviate the affliction, add affliction to it, and make it yet more grievous. The patient's case is sad indeed, when his medicines are poisons, and his physicians his worst disease. What Job saith here of his friends is true of all creatures in comparison with God, and one time or other we shall be made to see it, and own it, that miserable comforters are they all. When we are under convictions of sin, terrors of conscience, and the arrests of death, it is only the blessed Spirit that can comfort effectually, all others without him do it miserably, and sing songs to a heavy heart to no purpose.

3. For endless impertinence. Job wisheth that *vain words might have an end, ver. 3.* And, if they be vain, it were well they were never begun, and the sooner they are ended the better. Those, who are so wise as to speak to the purpose, will be so wise as to know when they have said enough of a thing, and when it is time to break off.

4. For causeless obstinacy. *What emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?* It is a great piece of confidence, and unaccountable, with Eliphaz, to charge men with those crimes which we cannot prove upon them; to pass a judgment on men's spiritual state, upon the view of their outward condition, and to re-advance those objections which have been again and again answered.

5. For the violation of the sacred laws of friendship, doing by his brother as he would not have been done by, one as his brother would not have done by him. This is a cutting reproof, and very affecting, *ver. 4, 5.*

1. He desires his friends, in imagination, for a little while to change conditions with him, to put their souls in his soul's stead; to suppose themselves in misery like him, and him at ease like them; and it is no absurd or foreign supposition, but what might quickly become true in fact; so strange, so sudden, many times, are the vicissitudes of human affairs, and such the turns of the wheel, that the spokes soon change places. Whatever our brethren sorrows are, we ought by sympathy to make them our own, because we know not how soon they may be so.

2. He represents the unkindness of their carriage towards him, by shewing what he could do to them if they were in his condition. *I could speak as ye do.* It is an easy thing to trample upon those that are down, and to find fault with what those say that are in extremity of pain and affliction. *I could heap up words against you* as you do against me, and how would you like it? how would you bear it?

2. He shews them what they should do, by telling them what in that case he would do, *ver. 5. I would strengthen you,* and say all I could to assuage your grief, but nothing to aggravate it. It is natural to sufferers to think what they would do, if the tables were turned; but perhaps our hearts may deceive us, we know not what we would do: we find it easier to discern the reasonableness and importance of a command, when we have occasion to claim the benefit of it, than when we have occasion to do the duty of it. See what is the duty we owe to our brethren in affliction. (1.) We should say and do all we can to strengthen them, suggesting to them such considerations as are proper to encourage their confidence in God and to support their sinking spirits. Faith and patience are the strength of the afflicted; what helps these graces confirms the feeble knees. (2.) To assuage their grief, the causes of their grief, if possible: or, however, their resentment of those causes. Good words cost nothing, but they may be of good service to those that are in sorrow, not only as it is some comfort to them to see their friends concerned for them, but they may be so minded of that which, through the prevalency of grief, was forgotten. Though hard words (we say) break no bones, yet kind words may help to make broken bones rejoice; and those have the tongue of the learned that know how to speak a word in season to the weary.

6. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased? 7. But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company,



pany. 8. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, which is a witness against me: and my leanness, rising up in me, beareth witness to my face. 9. He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth: mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. 10. They have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully, they have gathered themselves together against me. 11. God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. 12. I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark. 13. His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. 14. He breaketh me with breach upon breach; he runneth upon me like a giant. 15. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust. 16. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eye-lids is the shadow of death.

Job's complaint is here very bitter, as any where in all his discourses, and he is at a stand whether to smother it or to give it vent: sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, is a relief to the afflicted, according as the temper or the circumstances are, but Job found help by neither, ver. 6. (1.) Sometimes giving vent to grief gives ease, but *though I speak* (saith Job) *my grief is not assuaged*, my spirit is never the lighter for the pouring out of my complaint, nay, what I speak is misconstrued as to be turned to the aggravation of my grief. (2.) At other times, keeping silence makes the trouble the easier and the sooner forgot, but (saith Job) *though I forbear* I am never the nearer, *what am I eased?* If he complained, he was censured as passionate; if not, as sullen: if he maintained his integrity, that was his crime; if he made no answer to their accusations, his silence was taken for a confession of his guilt.

Here is a doleful remonstrance of Job's grievances: O what reason have we to bless God that we are not making such complaints here! He complains,

1. That his family was scattered, ver. 7. *He made me weary*, weary of speaking, weary of forbearing, weary of my friends, weary of life itself: my journey through the world proves so very uncomfortable that I am quite tired with it; and this made it as tiresome as any thing, that all his company was made desolate; his children and servants killed, and the poor remains of his great household dispersed. The company of good people, that used to meet at his house for religious worship, was now scattered, and he spent his sabbaths in silence and solitude. He had company indeed, but such as he would rather have been without, for they seemed to triumph in his desolation. If lovers and friends are put far from us, we must see and own God's hand in it, making our company desolate.

2. That his body was worn away with diseases and pains, so that he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, ver. 8. His face was furrowed, not with age, but sickness: *Thou hast filled me with wrinkles*. His flesh was wasted with the running of his sore boils, so that his leanness rose up in him, i. e. his bones, that were not seen, stuck out, chap. xxxiii. 21. These are called witnesses against him, witnesses of God's displeasure against him, and such witnesses as his friends produced against him to prove him a wicked man. Or, they are witnesses for me, that my complaint is not causeless, or, witnesses to me, that I am a dying man, and must be gone shortly.

3. That his enemy was a terror to him, threatened him, frightened him, looked stern upon him, and gave all the indications of rage against him, ver. 9. *He tears me in his wrath*. But who is this enemy? Either, (1.) Eliphaz, who shewed himself very much exasperated against him, and perhaps had expressed himself with such marks of indignation as are here mentioned: however, what he said tore Job's good name, and thundered nothing but terror to him: his eyes were sharpened to spy out matter of reproach against Job, and very barbarously both he and the rest of them used him. Or, (2.) Satan: he was his enemy that hated him, and, perhaps by the divine permission, terrified him with apparitions as (some think) he terrified our Saviour, which put him into his agonies in the garden; and thus he aimed to make him curse God. It is not improbable, that this is the enemy he means. Or, (3.) God himself: If we understand it of him, the expressions are indeed as rash as any he used: God hates none of his creatures, but Job's melancholy did thus represent to him the terrors of the Almighty; and nothing can be more grievous to a good man than to apprehend God to be his enemy. If the wrath of a king be as messengers of death, what is the wrath of the King of kings!

4. That all about him were abusive to him, ver. 10. They came upon him with open mouth to devour him, as if they would swallow him alive; so terrible were their threats, and so scornful was their carriage to him. They did him all the indignities they could invent, and even smote him on the cheek; and herein many were confederate; they gathered themselves together against him, even the abjects, *Psal. xxxv. 15*. Herein Job was a type of Christ, as many of the ancients make him: these very expressions are used in the predictions of his sufferings, *Psal. xxii. 13*. *They gaped upon me with their mouths*; and *Micah v. 1*. *They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek*; which was literally fulfilled, *Matt. xxvi. 67*. How were they increased that troubled him!

5: That God, instead of delivering him out of their hands, as he hoped, delivered him into their hands, ver. 11. *He had turned me over into the hands of the wicked*. They could have had no power against him if it had not been given them from above; he therefore looks beyond them to God, who gave them their commission, as David did when Shimei cursed him: but he thinks it strange, and almost thinks it hard, that those should have power against him who were God's enemies as much as his: but God sometimes makes use of wicked men as his sword to one another, *Psal. xvii. 13*, and his rod to his own children, *Isa. x. 5*. Herein also Job was a type of Christ, who was delivered into wicked hands to be crucified and slain by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, *Acts ii. 23*.

6. That God not only delivered him into the hands of the wicked, but took him into his own hands too, into which it is a fearful thing to fall, ver. 12. I was at ease in the comfortable enjoyments of the gift of God's bounty; not fretting and uneasily, as some are in the midst of their prosperity, who thereby provoke God to strip them: yet he has broken me asunder, put me upon the rack of pain, and tore me limb from limb. As in afflicting him had seemed, (1.) As if he were furious: though fury is not in God, he thought it was, when he took him by the neck (as a strong man in a passion would take a child) and shook him to pieces, triumphing in the irresistible power he had to do what he would with him. (2.) As if he

were partial: he hath distinguished me from the rest of mankind by this hard usage of me; he hath set me up for his mark, the butt of which he is pleased to let fly all his arrows: at me they are directed, and they come not by chance; against me they are levelled, as if I were the greatest sinner of all the men in the east, or were singled out to be made an example. When God set him up for a mark, his archers presently compassed him round. God has archers at command, who will be sure to hit the mark that he sets up. Whoever are our enemies, we must look upon them as God's archers, and see him directing the arrow. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*. (3.) As if he were cruel, and his wrath as relentless as his power was resistless. As if he contrived to touch him in the tenderest part, cleaving his reins asunder with acute pains; perhaps they were nephritic pains, those of the stone, which lie in the region of the kidneys. As if he had no mercy in reserve for him, he doth not spare, nor abate any thing of the extremity: and, as if he aimed at nothing but his death, and his death in the midst of the most grievous tortures, "he pours out my gall upon the ground." As when men have taken a wild beast and killed it, they open it, and pour out the gall with a louting of it. He thought his blood was poured out, as if it were not only not precious but nauseous. (4.) As if he were unreasonable and insatiable in his executions, ver. 14. *He breaketh me with breach upon breach*, follows me with one wound after another. So his troubles came at first; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking another came; and so it was still, new bites were rising every day, so that he had no prospect of the end of his troubles: thus he thought God ran upon him like a giant, whom he could not possibly stand before or confront: as the giants of old ran down all their poor neighbours, and were quite too hard for them. Note, Even good men, when they are in great and extraordinary troubles, have much ado not to entertain hard thoughts of God.

7. That he had divested himself of all his honour and all his comfort, in compliance with the surprising providences that were concerning him. Some can lessen their own troubles by concealing them, holding their heads as high, and putting as good a face upon it, as ever; but Job could not do so; he received the impressions of them, and, as one truly penitent, and truly patient, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, ver. 15, 16. (1.) He now laid aside all his ornaments and soft clothing, consulted not either his ease or finery in his dress, but sewed sackcloth upon his skin; that clothing he thought good enough for such a defiled disordered body as he had. Silks upon fores, such fores, he thought would be disagreeable; sackcloth would be more becoming. Those are fond indeed of gay clothing that will not be weaned from it by sickness and old age, and as Job was, ver. 8. by wrinkles and leanness. He not only put on sackcloth, but sewed it on, as one that resolved to continue his humiliation as long as the affliction continued. (2.) He insisted not upon any points of honour, but humbled himself under humbling providences; he defiled his horn in the dust, and refused the respects that used to be paid to his dignity, power, and eminency. Note, When God brings down our condition, that should bring down our spirits. Better lay the horn in the dust than lift it up in contradiction to the designs of providence, and have it broken at last. Eliphaz had represented Job as high and haughty, and unhumiliated under his affliction; no, saith Job, I know better things; the dust is now the fittest place for me. (3.) He banished mirth as utterly unreasonable, and set himself to sow in tears, ver. 16. *My face is foul with weeping* so constantly for my sins, for God's displeasure against me, and for my friends unkindness; this has brought a shadow of death upon my eye lids. He had not only wept away all his beauty, but almost wept his eyes out. In this also he was a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and much in tears, and pronounced those blessed that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

17. Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure. 18. O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place! 19. Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. 20. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God. 21. O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour! 22. When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

Job's condition was very deplorable, but had he nothing to support him? nothing to comfort him? Yes; and he here tells us what it was.

1. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had walked uprightly, and had never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready than he to acknowledge his sins of infirmity; but upon search he could not charge himself with any enormous crime, for which he should be made more miserable than other men, ver. 17. He had kept conscience void of offence, (1.) Towards men: *Not for any injustice in my hands*; any wealth that I have unjustly got or kept. Eliphaz had represented him as a tyrant and an oppressor: No, saith he, I never did any wrong to any man, but always despised the gain of oppression. (2.) Towards God. Also my prayer is pure, which it cannot be as long as there is injustice in our hands, *Isa. i. 15*. Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in religion, but he instanceth in prayer the great act of religion, and professeth that in that he was pure, though not from all infirmity, yet from reigning and allowed guile: it was not like the prayers of the Pharisees, who looked no farther than to be seen of men, and to serve a turn.

This assertion of his own integrity he backs with a solemn imprecation of shame and confusion to himself if it were not true, ver. 18. (1.) If there were any injustice in his hands, he wishes it might not be concealed, *O earth cover not thou my blood*; i. e. the innocent blood of others, which I am suspected to have shed. Murder will out; and let it, saith Job, if I have ever been guilty of it, *Gen. iv. 10, 11*. The day is coming, when the earth shall disclose her blood, *Isa. xxvi. 21*. and a good man is far from dreading that day. (2.) If there were any impurity in his prayers, he wisheth they might not be accepted; *let my cry have no place*. He was willing to be judged by that rule, *if I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me*, *Psal. lxxvi. 19*. There is another probable sense of these words; that he doth hereby, as it were, lay his death upon his friends, who broke his heart with their harsh censures, and chargeth the guilt of his blood upon them, begging of God to avenge it, and that the cry of his blood might have no place in which to lie hid, but might come up to heaven, and be heard by him that makes inquisition for blood.

2. He could appeal to God's omniscience concerning his integrity, ver. 19. The witness in our own bosoms for us will stand us in little stead if we have not a witness in heaven for us too; for *God is greater than our hearts*, and we are not to be our own judges; this therefore is Job's triumph, *my witness is in heaven*. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to a good man, when he lies under the censure of his brethren, that there is a God in heaven who knows his integrity, and will clear it up sooner or later. See *John v. 31—37*. This one witness is instead of a thousand.

3. He had a God to go to, before whom he might unboast himself, ver. 20.



ver. 20, 21. See here, (1.) How the case stood between him and his friends; he knew not how to be free with them, nor could he expect either a fair hearing with them or fair dealing from them: my friends (so they call themselves) scorn me, they set themselves not only to oppose me but to expose me; they are of counsel against me, and use all their art and eloquence (so the word signifies) to run me down. The scorn of friends are more cutting than those of enemies, but we must expect them, and provide accordingly. (2.) How it stood between him and God. He doubted not but that (1.) God did now take cognisance of his sorrows. *Mine eye pours out tears to God.* He had said, ver. 16. that he wept much; here he tells us in what channel his tears ran, and which way they were directed: his sorrow was not that of the world; but he sorrowed after a godly sort, wept before the Lord, and offered to him the sacrifice of a broken heart. Note, Even tears, when sanctified to God, give ease to troubled spirits; and, if men fling our grief, this may comfort us, that God regards them. (2.) That he would in due time clear up his innocency, ver. 21. *O that one might plead for a man with God!* If he could but now have the same freedom at God's bar that men commonly have at the bar of the civil magistrate, he doubted not but to carry his cause, for the Judge himself was a witness to his integrity. The language of this wish is that, *Isai. l. 7, 8. I know that I shall not be ashamed, for he is near that justifies me.* Some give a gospel sense of this verse, and the original will very well bear it: *and he will plead, (i. e. there is one that will plead) for man with God, even the Son of Man, for his friend or neighbour.* Those who pour out tears before God, though they cannot plead for themselves by reason of their distance and defects, have a friend to plead for them, even the Son of man; and on this we must bottom all our hopes of acceptance with God.

4. He had a prospect of death which would put a period to all his troubles: such confidence had he towards God, that he could take pleasure in thinking of the approach of death, when he should be determined to his everlasting state, as one that doubted not but it would be well with him then: *when a few years are come, the years of number, which are determined and appointed to me, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.* Note, (1.) To die is to go the way whence we shall not return; it is to go a journey, a long journey, a journey for good and all: to remove from this to another country, from the world of sense to the world of spirits: it is a journey to our long home; there will be no coming back to our state in this world, nor any change of our state in the other world. 2. We must all of us very certainly and very shortly go this journey; and it is comfortable to those who keep a good conscience to think of it, for it is the crown of their integrity.

## C H A P. XVII.

In this chapter (1.) Job reflects upon the harsh censures which his friends had passed upon him; and, looking upon himself as a dying man, ver. 1. he appeals to God, and begs of him speedily to appear for him and right him, because they had wronged him, and he knew not how to right himself, ver. 2—7. but hopes, though it be a surprise, it will be no stumbling-block to good people to see him thus abused, ver. 8, 9. (2.) He reflects upon the vain hopes they had set him with, that he should yet see good days, shewing that his days were just at an end, and, with his body, all his hopes would be buried in the dust, ver. 10—16. His friends becoming strange to him, which greatly grieved him, he makes death and the grave familiar to him, which yielded him some comfort.

1. **M**Y breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me. 2. Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eyes continue in their provocation? 3. Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me? 4. For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them. 5. He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail. 6. He hath made me also a byword of the people, and aforetime I was as a tabret. 7. Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow. 8. Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. 9. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Job's discourse here is somewhat broken and interrupted, and he passeth suddenly from one thing to another, as is usual with men in trouble: but we may reduce what is said here to three heads.

1. The deplorable condition which poor Job was now in, which he describes, to aggravate the great unkindness of his friends to him, and to justify his own complaints. Let us see what his case was.

(1.) He was a dying man, ver. 1. He had said, chap. xvi. 22. *When a few years are come I shall go that long journey.* But here he corrects himself; what do I talk of years to come? alas, I am just setting out on that journey, am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; my breath is already corrupt, or broken off, my spirits are spent: I am a gone man. It is good for every one of us thus to look upon ourselves as dying, and especially to think of it when we are sick. We are dying; that is, (1.) Our life is going, for the breath of life is going. It is continually going forth, it is in our nostrils, *Isa. ii. 22.* the door at which it entered, *Gen. ii. 7.* there it is upon the threshold ready to depart. Perhaps Job's distemper obstructed his breathing, and short breath will be no breath after a while. Let the anointed of the Lord be the breath of our nostrils, and let us get spiritual life breathed into us; and that breath will never be corrupted. (2.) Our time is ending. *My days are extinct, are put out as a candle,* which from the first lighting is continually wadding and burning down, and will by degrees burn out of itself, but may by a thousand accidents be extinguished. Such is life. It concerns us therefore carefully to redeem the days of time, and to spend them in getting ready for the days of eternity, which will never be extinct. (3.) We are expected in our long home. *The graves are ready for me.* But would not one grave serve? yes, but he speaks of the sepulchres of his fathers, to which he must be gathered: the graves where they are laid are ready for me also. Graves in comfort; the congregation of the dead. Wherever we go there is but a step between us and the grave. Whatever is unready, that is ready: it is a bed soon made. If the graves be ready for us, it concerns us to be ready for the graves. *The graves for me,* so it runs; nothing not only his expectation of death but his desire of it; I have done with the world, and have nothing now to wish for but a grave.

(2.) He was a despised man, ver. 6. He (i. e. Eliphaz, so some, or rather God, whom he all along acknowledged to be the author of his calamities) has made me a by-word of the people, the talk of the country, a laughing-stock to many, a gazing-stock to all, and aforetime, or, to men's faces, publicly I was as a tabret, that who would might play upon; they made ballads of him: his name became a proverb; it is so still, *as poor as Job.* He has now made me a by-word, a reproach of men, whereas aforetime, in my prosperity, I was as a tabret, the darling of the country. (*Deliciae humani generis*), whom they were all pleased with. It is common for those who were honoured in their wealth to be despised in their poverty.

(3.) He was a man of sorrows, ver. 7. He wept so much that he had almost lost his sight; *mine eye is dim by reason of sorrow,* chap. xvi. 16. The sorrow of the world thus works darkness and death. He vexed so much, that he had fretted all the flesh off his back, and was become a perfect anatomy, a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones; *all my members are as a shadow.* I am grown so poor and thin, that I am not to be called a man, but the shadow of a man.

2. The ill use which his friends made of his miseries: they trampled upon him, and insulted over him, and condemned him as a hypocrite, because he was thus grievously afflicted. Hard usage! Now observe,

(1.) How Job describes it, and what construction he puts upon their discourses with him. He looks upon himself as basely abused by them. (1.) They abused him with their foul censures, condemning him as an ill man, justly reduced thus, and exposed to contempt, ver. 2. They are mockers, that deride my calamities, and insult over me, because I am thus brought low. They are so with me, abusing me to my face, pretending friendship in their visit, but intending mischief. I cannot get clear of them; they are continually tearing me, and they will not be wrought upon, either by reason or pity, to let fall the prosecution. (2.) They abused him too with their fair promises; for in them they did but banter him. Hereckous them, ver. 5. among those that speak flattery to their friends. They all came to mourn with him, Eliphaz began with a commendation of him, chap. iv. 3. They had all promised him how happy he should be if he would take their advice: now all this he looked upon as flattery, and designed to vex him so much the more. All this he calls their provocation, ver. 2. They did what they could to provoke him, and then condemned him for his resentment of it; but he thinks himself excusable when his eye continued thus in their provocation; it never ceased, and he could never look off it. Note, The unkindness of those that trample upon their friends in affliction, that banter and abuse them then, is enough to try, if not tire, the patience even of Job himself.

(2.) How he condemns it. (1.) It was a sign that God had hid their heart from understanding, ver. 4. and that in this manner they were infatuated, and their wonted wisdom was departed from them. Wisdom is a gift of God, which he grants to some and withholds from others; grants at some times, and withholds at other times. Those, that are void of compassion, are so far void of understanding. Where there is not the tenderness of a man, one may question whether there be the understanding of a man. (2.) It would be a lasting reproach and diminution to them; therefore shalt thou not exalt them. Those are certainly kept back from honour, whose hearts are hid from understanding. When God befools men, he will abuse them. Sure, they, who discover so little acquaintance with the methods of providence, shall not have the honour of deciding this controversy! That is reserved for a man of better sense and better temper; such an one as Elihu afterwards appeared to be. (3.) It would entail a curse upon their families. He, that thus violates the sacred laws of friendship, forfeits the benefit of it, not only for himself but for his posterity. *Even the eyes of his children shall fail;* and, when they look for succour and comfort from their own and their fathers friends, they shall look in vain, as I have done, and be as much disappointed as I am in you. Note, Those that wrong their neighbours, may prove to wrong their own children more than they are aware of.

(3.) How he appeals from them to God, ver. 4. Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee, i. e. Let me be assured that God will take the hearing and determining of the cause into his own hands, and I desire no more. Let some or other engage for God to bring on this matter. Thus they, whose hearts condemn them not, have confidence towards God, and can with humble and believing boldness beg of him to search and try them. Some make Job here to glance upon the mediation of Christ, for he speaks of a surety with God, without whom he durst not appear before God, nor try his cause at his bar; for, though his friends accusations of him were utterly false, yet he could not justify himself before God but in a mediator. Our English annotations give this reading of the verse: *Appoint, I pray thee, my surety with thee, viz. Christ, who is with thee in heaven, and hath undertaken to be my surety, let him plead my cause and stand up for me, and who is he then that will strike upon mine hand? i. e. who dares then contend with me? who shall lay any thing to my charge, if Christ be an advocate for me? Rom. viii. 32, 33. Christ is the surety of the better testament, Heb. vii. 22: a surety of God's appointing; and, if he undertake for us, we need not fear what can be done against us.*

3. The good use which the righteous should make of Job's afflictions, both from God, from his enemies, and from his friends, ver. 8, 9. Observe here,

(1.) How the saints are described. (1.) They are upright men, honest and sincere, and that act from a steady principle, with a single eye. This was Job's own character, chap. i. 1. and probably he speaks of such upright men especially as had been his intimates and associates. (2.) They are the innocent; not perfectly so, but it is what they aim at and press towards. Sincerity is evangelical innocence, and they that are upright are said to be innocent from the great transgression, *Psalm. xix. 13.* (3.) They are the righteous; who walk in the way of righteousness. (4.) They have clean hands, kept clean from the gross pollution of sin, and, when spotted with infirmities, washed with innocency, *Psalm. xxvi. 6.*

(2.) How they should be affected with the account of Job's troubles: great enquiry, no doubt, would be made concerning him, and every one would speak of him and his case, and what use will good people make of it?

1. It will amaze them. *Upright men shall be astonished at this,* they will wonder to hear that so good a man as Job should be so grievously afflicted both in body, name, and estate; that God should lay his hand so heavy upon him, and that his friends, who ought to have comforted him, should add to his grief; that such a remarkable saint should be such a remarkable sufferer, and so useful a man laid aside in the midst of his usefulness; what shall we say to these things? Upright men, though satisfied in general that God is wise and holy in all he doth, yet cannot but be astonished at such dispensations of providence; paradoxes which will not be unfolded till the mystery of God shall be finished.

2. It will animate them. Instead of being deterred from, and discouraged in, the service of God, by the hard usage which this faithful servant of God met with, they shall be so much the more emboldened to proceed and persevere in it. That which was St. Paul's care, *1 Thess. iii. 3.* was Job's, that no good man should be moved either from his holiness or his comfort



comfort by these afflictions, that none should for the sake hereof think the worse of the ways or work of God. And that which was St. Paul's comfort was his too, that the *brethren of the Lord would wax confident by his bonds*, Phil. i. 14. They would hereby be animated,

(1.) To oppose sin, and to confront the corrupt and pernicious inferences which evil men would draw from Job's sufferings. as that God has forsaken the earth, that it is in vain to serve him, and the like, *the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite*, will not bear to hear this (Rev. ii. 2.), but shall withstand him to his face; will stir up himself to search into the meaning of such providences, and study these hard chapters, that he may read them readily; will stir up himself to maintain religion's just, but injured, cause, against all its opposers. Note, the boldness of the attacks, which profane people make upon religion, should sharpen the courage and resolution of its friends and advocates. It is time to stir when proclamation is made in the gate of the camp. Who is on the Lord's side? When vice is daring, it is no time for virtue to be sneaking.

(2.) To persevere in religion. The righteous, instead of drawing back, or so much as starting back, at this frightful spectacle, or standing still to deliberate whether he should proceed or not (allude to 2 Sam. ii. 23), shall with so much more constancy and resolution hold on his way and press forward. Though in me he foresees bonds and afflictions abide him, yet *none of those things shall move him*, Acts xx. 24. Those, who keep their eye upon heaven as their end, will keep their feet in the paths of religion as their way, whatever difficulties and discouragements they meet with in it.

(3.) In order thereunto, to grow in grace. He will not only hold on his way notwithstanding, but will grow stronger and stronger, and, by the sight of other good men's trials and experience of his own, he will be made more vigorous and lively in his duty, more warm and affectionate, more resolute and undaunted, and, the worse others, are the better he will be: that, which disinuys others, heartens him. The blustering wind makes the traveller gather his cloak the closer about him and gird it the faster. They, that are truly wise and good, will be continually growing wiser and better. Proficiency in religion is a good sign of sincerity in it.

10. But, as for you all, do you return, and come now; for I cannot find one wise man among you. 11. My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. 12. They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness. 13. If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. 14. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. 15. And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it? 16. They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.

Job's friends had pretended to comfort him with the hopes of his return to a prosperous estate again: now he here shews,

1. That it was their folly to talk so, ver. 10. Return and come now, be convinced that you are in an error, and let me persuade you to be of my mind for I cannot find one wise man among you, that knows how to explain the difficulties of God's providence, or how to apply the consolations of his promises. Those do not go wisely about the work of comforting the afflicted, who fetch their comforts from the possibility of their recovery and enlargement in this world, though that is not to be despaired of, but at the best it is uncertain, and if it should fail, as perhaps it may, the comfort built upon it may fail too: it is therefore our wisdom to comfort ourselves and others in distress with that which will not fail, the promise of God, his love and grace, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life.

2. That it would be much more his folly to heed them; for, 1. All his measures were already broken and he was full of confusion, ver. 11, 12. He owns he had in his prosperity often pleased himself both with projects of what he should do and prospects of what he should enjoy; but now he looked upon his days as past and drawing towards a period: all those purposes were broken off, and those expectations dashed. He had thoughts about enlarging his border, increasing his stock, and settling his children, and many pious thoughts, it is likely, of promoting religion in his country, redressing grievances, reforming the profane, relieving the poor, and raising funds perhaps for charitable uses; but all these thoughts of his heart were now at an end, and he should never have the satisfaction of seeing his designs effected. Note, The period of our days will be the period of all our contrivances and hopes for this world; but, if with full purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord, death will not break off that purpose.

Job, being thus put upon new counsels, was under a constant uneasiness, ver. 12. The thoughts of his heart being broken, they changed the night into day, and shortened the light. Some in their vanity and riot turn night into day and day into night, but Job did so through trouble and anguish of spirit, which was a hindrance. (1.) To the repose of the night, keeping his eyes waking, so that the night was as wearisome to him as the day, and the toils of the night tired him as much as the toils of the day. (2.) To the entertainments of the day: the light of the morning is welcome, but, by reason of this inward darkness, the comfort of it is soon gone, and the day is to me as dismal as the black and dark night, Deut. xxviii. 67. See what reason we have to be thankful for that health and ease which enable us to welcome both the shadows of the evening and the light of the morning.

2. All his expectations from this world would very shortly be buried in the grave with him; so that it was a jest for him to think of such mighty things as they had flattered him with the hopes of, chap. iv. 19.—viii. 21.—xi. 17. Alas, you do but make a fool of me!

1. He saw himself just dropping into the grave. A convenient house, an easy bed, and agreeable relations, are some of those things which we take satisfaction in in this world: Job expected not any of these above ground; all he felt, and all he had in view, was unpleasing and disagreeable, but under ground he expected them.

(1.) He counted upon no house but the grave, ver. 13. If I wait, if there be any place where I shall ever be easy again, it must be in the grave: I should deceive myself if I should count upon any outlet from my trouble but what death will give me: nothing so sure as that. Note, In all our prosperity it is good to keep death in prospect: whatever we expect, let us be sure to expect that; for that may prevent other things we expect, but nothing will prevent that. But see how he endeavours not only to reconcile himself to the grave, but to recommend it to himself; it is my house. The grave is a house; to the wicked it is a prison-house, Job. xxiv. 12, 20. To the godly it is (Bethabara) a passage-house in their way home: it is my house, mine by descent, I am born to it; it is my father's house; mine by purchase; I have made myself obnoxious to it. We must every

one of us shortly remove to this house, and it is our wisdom to provide accordingly; let us think of sitting, and send before to our long home.

(2.) He counted upon no quiet bed but in the darkness: there, saith he, I have made my bed. It is made, for it is ready, and I am just going to it. The grave is a bed; for we shall rest in it in the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the morning of our everlasting day, Isa. lviii. 2. Let this make good people willing to die; it is but going to bed; they are weary and sleepy, and it is time they were in their beds; why should they not go willingly when their Father calls? Nay, Nay I have made my bed, by preparation for it: have endeavoured to make it easy, by keeping conscience pure, by seeing Christ lying in this bed, and so turning it into a bed of spices, and by looking beyond it to the resurrection.

(3.) He counted upon no agreeable relations but what we had in the grave, ver. 14. I have cried to corruption, i. e. to the grave, where the body will corrupt, Thou art my father, for our bodies were formed out of the earth, and to the worms there, ye are my mother and my sister, to whom I am allied, for man is a worm, and with whom I must be conversant, for the worms shall cover us, Job xxi. 26. Job complained that his children were estranged from him, chap. xix. 13, 14. therefore here he claims acquaintance with other relations that would stick to him when those disowned him. Note, 1. We are all of us near akin to corruption and the worms. 2. It is therefore good to make ourselves familiar with them, by conversing much with them in our thoughts and meditations, which would very much help us above the inordinate love of life and fear of death.

2. He saw all his hopes from this world dropping into the grave with him, ver. 15, 16. Seeing I must shortly leave the world, where is now my hope? How can I expect to prosper, who do not expect to live? He is not hopeless, but his hope is not there where they would have it be. If in this life only he had hope, he were of all men most miserable. No, as for my hope, that hope which I comfort and support myself with, who shall see it? It is something out of sight that I hope for; not things that are seen, that are temporal, but things not seen, that are eternal: what is his hope he will tell us, chap. xix. 25. Non est mortale quod opto, immortale peto. But as for the hopes you would buoy me up with, they shall go down with me to the bars of the pit; you are dying men, and cannot make good your promises; I am a dying man, and cannot enjoy the good you promise; seeing therefore our rest will be together in the dust, let us all lay aside the thoughts of this world, and set our hearts upon another. We must shortly be in the dust, for dust we are; dust and ashes in the pit, under the bars of the pit, held fast there, never to lose the bands of death till the general resurrection: but we shall rest there, we shall rest together there. Job and his friends could not agree now, but they will both be quiet in the grave; the dust of that will shortly stop their mouths, and put an end to the controversy; let the foresight of this cool the heat of all contenders, and moderate disputers of this world.

## C H A P. XVIII.

In this chapter Bildad makes a second assault upon Job. In his first discourse, chap. viii. he had given him encouragement to hope that all should yet be well with him; but here, not a word of that; he is grown more peevish, and is so far from being convinced by Job's reasonings, that he is but more exasperated. (1.) He sharply reproves Job as haughty and passionate, and obstinate in his opinion, ver. 1—4. (2.) He enlargeth upon the doctrine he had before maintained, concerning the misery of wicked people, and the ruin that attends them, ver. 5—21. In which he seems all along to have an eye to Job's complaints of the miserable condition he was in; that he was in the dark, bewildered, ensnared, terrified, and hastening out of the world. Why this, saith Bildad, is the condition of a wicked man, and therefore thou art one.

1. THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. How long will it be ere you make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak. 3. Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight? 4. He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?

Bildad here shoots his arrows, even bitter words, against poor Job, little thinking that, though he was a wise and good man, yet, in this instance, he was serving Satan's design, in adding to his affliction.

1. He charges him with idle, endless, talk, as Eliphaz had done, chap. xv. 2, 3. How long will it be, ere you make an end of words? ver. 2. Here he reflects not only upon Job himself, but either upon all the managers of the conference, thinking perhaps that Eliphaz and Zophar did not speak so close to the purpose as they might have done, or upon some that were present, who possibly took part with Job, and put in a word now and then in his favour, though it be not recorded. Bildad was weary of hearing others speak, and impatient till it came to his turn; which cannot be observed to any man's praise, for we ought to be swift to hear and slow to speak. It is common for contenders to monopolize the reputation of wisdom, and then to insist upon it as their privilege to be dictators. How unbecoming that is in others every one can see, but few that are guilty of it can see it in themselves. Time was when Job had the last word in all debates, chap. xxix. 22. After my words they spake not again: then he was in power and prosperity, but now he was impoverished and brought low; he could scarce be allowed to speak at all, and every thing he said was as much vilified as formerly it had been magnified: wisdom therefore (as the world goes) is good with an inheritance, Eccl. vii. 11. for the poor man's wisdom is despised, and, because he is poor, his words are not heard, Eccl. ix. 16.

2. With a regardlessness of what was said to him, intimated in that, Mark, and afterwards we will speak. And it is to no purpose to speak, though what is said be never so much to the purpose, if those to whom it is spoken will not mark and observe it. Let the ear be opened to hear as the learned, and then the tongues of the learned will do good service, 1 Sai. i. 4. and not otherwise. It is an encouragement to those that speak of the things of God to see the hearers attentive.

3. With a haughty contempt and disdain of his friends, and of that which they offered. Ver. 3. Wherefore are we counted as beasts? This was invidious: Job had indeed called them mockers, had represented them both as unwise and as unkind, wanting both in the reason and tenderness of men; but he did not count them beasts; yet Bildad so represents it. (1.) Because his high spirit resented what Job had said, as if it had been the greatest affront imaginable. Proud men are apt to think themselves slighted more than really they are. (2.) Because his hot spirit was willing to find a pretence to be hard upon Job. Those, that incline to be severe upon others, will have it thought that they have first been so upon them.

4. With



4. With outrageous passion. *He teareth himself in his anger*, ver. 4. Herein he seems to reflect upon what Job had said, chap. xiii. 14. *Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth?* It is thine own fault, saith Bildad; or upon what he said, chap. xvi. 9. where he seemed to charge it upon God, or, as some think, upon Eliphaz: *He teareth himself in his wrath*, no, saith Bildad, thou alone shalt bear it. *He teareth me in his anger*. Note, Anger is a sin that is its own punishment: fretful, passionate people, tear and torment themselves. *He teareth his soul*, for the word is; every sin wounds the soul, tears that, wrongs that, *Prov. viii. 36.* unbridled passion particularly.

5. With a proud and arrogant expectation to give law even to providence itself. *Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?* No sure, there is no reason for that, that the course of nature should be changed, and the settled rules of government violated, to gratify the humour of one man. Job, dost thou think the world cannot stand without thee? but that, if thou art ruined, all the world is ruined and forsaken with thee? Some make it a reproof of Job's justification of himself, falsely insinuating, that either Job was a wicked man, or we must deny a providence, and suppose that God has forsaken the earth, and the Rock of ages is removed. It is rather a just reproof of his passionate complaints: when we quarrel with the events of providence, we forget, that, whatever befalls us, it is, (1.) according to the eternal purpose and counsel of God: (2.) according to the written word; thus it is written, that in the world we must have tribulation, that, since we sin daily, we must expect to smart for it: and, (3.) according to the usual way and custom, the track of providence, nothing but what is common to men; and to expect that God's counsels should change, his method alter, and his word fail to please us, is as absurd and unreasonable, as to think that *the earth shall be forsaken for us, and the rock removed out of its place.*

5. Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the sparks of his fire shall not shine. 6. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him. 7. The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. 8. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. 9. The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him. 10. The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.

The rest of Bildad's discourse is entirely taken up in elegant description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, in which there is a great deal of certain truth, and which will be of excellent use, if duly considered; that a sinful condition is a sad condition, and that iniquity will be men's ruin, if they do not repent of it: but, (1.) it is not true that all wicked people are visibly and openly made thus miserable in this world; nor, (2.) that all who are brought into great distress and trouble in this world are therefore to be deemed and adjudged wicked men, though no other proof appears against them; and therefore, though Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe nor just.

In these verses we have,

1. The destruction of the wicked foreseen and foretold under the similitude of darkness, ver. 5, 6. *Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out*; even this light, the best and brightest part of him, shall be put out; even that which he rejoiced in shall fail him: or the yea may refer to Job's complaints of the great distress he was in, and the darkness he should shortly make his bed in: yea, saith Bildad, so it is, thou art clouded and straitened, and made miserable, and no better could be expected, for *the light of the wicked shall be put out*, and therefore shall. Observe here, (1.) The wicked may have some light for a while, some pleasure, some joy, some hope, within, as well as wealth, and honour, and power, without: But his light is but a spark, ver. 5. a little thing, and soon extinguished: it is but a candle, ver. 6. wasting and burning down, and easily blown out. It is not the light of the Lord, that is, sun-light, but the *light of his own fire*, and *sparks of his own kindling*, Ita. i. 11. (2.) The light will certainly be put out, at length quite put out, so that not the least spark of it shall remain, with which to kindle another fire. Even while he is in his tabernacle, while he is in the body, which is the tabernacle of the soul, (2 Cor. v. 1.) the light shall be dark, he shall have no true solid comfort, no joy that is satisfying, no hope that is supporting; even the light that is in him is darkness, and how great is that darkness? But, when he is put out of this tabernacle by death, *his candle shall be put out with him*: the period of his life will be the final period of all his days, and will turn all his hopes into endless despair. *When a wicked man dies, his expectations shall perish*, Prov. xi. 7. *He shall lie down in sorrow.*

2. The preparatives for that destruction, represented under the similitude of a beast or bird caught in a snare, or a malefactor arrested and taken into custody, in order to his punishment, ver. 7, 8, 9, 10.

1. Satan is preparing for his destruction. *He is the robber that shall prevail against him*, ver. 9. for, as he was a murderer, so he was a robber, from the beginning. He, as the tempter, lays snares for sinners in the way wherever they go, and he shall prevail. If he make them sinful like himself, he will make them miserable like him: *he hunts for the precious life*.

2. He is himself preparing for his own destruction by going on in sin, and so *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath*. God gives him up, as he deserves and desires, to his own counsels, and then *his own counsels cast him down*, ver. 7. His sinful project and pursuits bring him to one mischief or other. *He is cast into a net by his own feet*, ver. 8. runs upon his own destruction, is *snared in the work of his own hands*. Psal. ix. 16, *his own tongue falls upon him*, Psal. lxxiv. 8. *In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare.*

3. God is preparing for his destruction. The sinner, by his sin, is preparing the fuel, and then God, by his wrath, is preparing the fire. See here, (1.) How the sinner is infatuated to run himself into the snare; and whom God will destroy he befools. (2.) How he is embarrassed; the steps of his strength, his mighty designs and efforts, shall be straitened, so that he shall not compass what he intended; and, the more he strives to extricate himself, the more will he be entangled. Evil men wax worse and worse. (3.) How he is secured and kept from outunning the judgments of God that are in pursuit of him: *the gin shall take him by the heel*. He can no more escape the divine wrath that is in pursuit of him than a man, so held, can flee from the pursuer. *God knows how to reserve the wicked for the day of judgment*, 2 Pet. ii. 9.

11. Terrors shall make him afraid on every side and shall drive him to his feet. 12. His strength shall be

hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. 13. It shall devour the strength of his skin: even the first-born of death shall devour his strength. 14. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. 15. It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. 16. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off. 17. His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. 18. He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. 19. He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings. 20. They that come after him shall be astounded at his day, as they that went before were affrighted. 21. Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God!

Bildad here describes the destruction itself which wicked people are reserved for in the other world, and which in some degree often befalls them in this world. Come, and see what a miserable condition the sinner is in when his day comes to fall.

1. See him disheartened and weakened by continual terrors, arising from the sense of his own guilt and the dread of God's wrath, ver. 11, 12. *Terror shall make him afraid on every side*: the terrors of his own conscience shall haunt him, so that he shall never be easy; wherever he goes these shall dog him; which way soever he looks these shall stare him in the face. It will make him tremble to see himself fought against by the whole creation; to see heaven frowning on him, hell gaping for him, and earth sick of him. He, that carries his own accuser and his own tormentor always in his bosom, cannot but be afraid on every side. This will drive him to his feet like a malefactor, who, being conscious of his guilt, takes to his heels and flies for the same, *flee when none pursue*, Prov. xxviii. 1. but his feet will do him no service, they are fast in the snare, ver. 9. The sinner may as soon overpower the divine omnipotence as overrun the divine omniscience, Amos ix. 2, 3.

No marvel for the sinner to be dispirited and distracted with fear; for, (1.) He sees his ruin approaching, destruction shall be ready at his side, to seize him whenever justice gives the word, so that he is *brought into desolation in a moment*. Psal. lxxiii. 19. (2.) He feels himself utterly unable to grapple with it, either to escape it, or to bear up under it. That which he relied upon, as his strength, his wealth, power, pomp, friends, and the hardness of his own spirit, shall fail him in the time of need, and he hunger-bitten; i. e. it shall do him no more service than a furnished man, pining away for hunger, would do in work or war. The case being thus with him, no marvel that he is a terror to himself. Note, The way of sin is a way of fear, and leads to everlasting confusion, which the present terrors of an impure and unpacified conscience are earnest of, as they were to Cain and Judas.

2. See him devoured and swallowed up by a miserable death; and miserable indeed a wicked man's death is, how secure and jovial soever his life was.

(1.) See him dying, arrested by the first-born of death, some disease, or some stroke, that has in it a more than ordinary resemblance of death itself; so great a death, as it is called, 2 Cor. i. 10. a messenger of death, that has in it an uncommon strength and terror; weakened by the harbingers of death which devour the strength of his skin, i. e. it shall bring rottenness into his bones, and consume them. *His confidence shall then be rooted out of his tabernacle*, ver. 14. i. e. All that he trusteth to for his support shall be taken from him, and he shall have nothing to rely upon, no, not his own tabernacle. His own soul was his confidence, but that shall be rooted out of the tabernacle of his body, as a tree that cumbered the ground. Thy soul shall be required of thee!

(2.) See him dead, and see his case then with an eye of faith. (1.) He is then brought to the king of terrors. He was surrounded with terrors while he lived, ver. 11. and Death was the king of all those terrors; they fought against the sinner in Death's name, for it is by reason of death that sinners are *all their life-time subject to bondage*, Heb. ii. 15. and at length they will be brought to that which they so long feared, as a captive to the conqueror. Death is terrible to nature; our Saviour himself prayed, *Father save me from this hour*; but, to the wicked, it is, in a special manner, the king of terrors; both as it is a period of that life in which they placed their happiness, and a passage to that life where they will find their endless misery. How happy then are the saints, and how much indebted to the Lord Jesus, by whom death is so far abolished, and the property of it altered, that this king of terrors is become a friend and servant! (3.) He is then *driven from light into darkness*, ver. 18. from the light of this world, and his prosperous condition in it, into darkness, the darkness of the grave, the darkness of hell, into utter darkness, never to see light, Psal. xlix. 19. not the least gleam, nor any hopes of it. (3.) He is then chased out of the world, hurried and dragged away by the messengers of death, fore against his will; chased as Adam out of paradise, for the world is his paradise. It intimates that he would fain stay here, he is loth to depart, but go he must: all the world is weary of him, and therefore chaseth him out, as glad to be rid him. This is death to a wicked man.

3. See his family sunk and cut off, ver. 15. The wrath and curse of God light and lie not only upon his head and heart, but upon his house too, to consume it, with the *timber and stones thereof*, Zech. v. 4. Death itself shall dwell in his tabernacle; and, having expelled him, shall take possession of his house, to the terror and destruction of all that he leaves behind: even the dwelling shall be ruined for the sake of its owner; *brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation*, ruined upon it as upon Sodom, to the destruction of which this seems to have reference; and some think he here upbraids Job with the burning of his sheep and servants with fire from heaven. The reason is here given why his tabernacle is thus marked for ruin, because it is none of his, i. e. it was unjustly got, and kept from the rightful owner, and therefore let him not expect either the comfort or the continuance of it.

His children shall perish either with him or after him, ver. 16. so that his roots being in his own person, *dried up beneath*, above his branch, every child of his family shall be cut off. Thus the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab, were cut off; none that descended from them were left alive. They who take root in the earth may expect it will thus be dried up; but, if we be rooted in Christ, even our leaf shall not wither, much less shall our branch be cut off. Those who consult the true honour of their family, and the welfare of its branches, will be afraid of withering it by sin. The

extirpation



extirpation of the sinner's family is mentioned again, *ver. 19.* *He shall neither have son nor nephew, child nor grandchild, to enjoy his estate and bear up his name, nor shall there be any remaining in his dwelling akin to him.* Sin entails a curse upon posterity, and the iniquity of the fathers is often visited upon the children. Herein also, it is probable, Bildad reflects upon the death of Job's children and servants, as a further proof of his being a wicked man, whereas all that are written childless are not thereby written graceless; there is a name better than that of sons and daughters.

4. See his memory buried with him, or made odious; he shall either be forgotten or spoken of with dishonour, *ver. 17.* *His remembrance shall perish from the earth;* and, if it perish from thence, it perisheth wholly, for it was never written in heaven, as the names of the saints are, *Luke x. 20.* All his honour shall be laid and lost in the dust, or stained with a perpetual infamy, so that he shall have no name in the street, departing without being desired. Thus the judgments of God follow him after death in this world, as an indication of the misery his soul is in after death, and an earnest of that everlasting shame and contempt to which he shall rise in the great day. *The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot, Prov. x. 7.*

5. See an universal amazement at his fall, *ver. 20.* They that see it are affrighted, so sudden is the change, so dreadful the execution, so threatening to all about him; and they that come after, and hear the report of it, are astonished at it; their ears are made to tingle, and their hearts to tremble, and they cry out, *Lord, how terrible art thou in thy judgments!* A place or person utterly ruined is said to be *made an astonishment*, *Deut. xxviii. 37, 2 Chron. vii. 21.* *Jer. xxv. 9, 18.* Horrible sins bring strange punishments.

Lastly, see all this averred as the unanimous sense of the patriarchal age, grounded upon their knowledge of God, and their many observations of his providence, *ver. 21.* *Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place, this the condition of him that knows not God!* See here what is the beginning and what is the end of the wickedness of this wicked world. (1.) The beginning of it is ignorance of God, and it is a willful ignorance; for there is that to be known of him which is sufficient to leave them for ever inexcusable. They know not God, and then they go all to nought; Pharaoh knows not the Lord, and therefore will not obey his voice. (2.) The end of it, and that is utter destruction. Such, so miserable, are the dwellings of the wicked. Vengeance will be taken of those that *know not God*, *2 Thess. i. 8.* For those whom he has not honour from he will get him honour upon: let us therefore stand in awe and not sin, for it will certainly be bitterness in the latter end.

## C H A P. XIX.

*This chapter is Job's answer to Bildad's discourse in the foregoing chapter. Though his spirit was grieved and much heated, and Bildad was very peevish, yet he gave him leave to say all he designed to say, did not break in upon him in the midst of his argument; but, when he had done, gave a fair answer, in which, 1. He complains of unkind usage. And very unkindly he takes it. (1.) That his comforts added to his affliction, *ver. 2-7.* (2.) That his God was the author of his affliction, *ver. 8-12.* (3.) That his relations and friends were strange to him, and shy of him in his affliction, *ver. 13-19.* (4.) That he had no compassion shewn him in his affliction, *ver. 20, 22.* 2. He comforts himself with the believing hopes of happiness in the other world, though he had so little comfort in this; making a very solemn confession of his faith, with a desire it might be recorded as an evidence of his sincerity, *ver. 23-27.* He concludes with a caution to his friends not to persist in their hard censures of him, *ver. 28, 29.* If the remonstrance Job here makes of his grievances may serve sometimes to justify our complaints, yet his cheerful views of the future state, at the same time, may shame us Christians, and may serve to silence our complaints, or at least to balance them.*

1. **T**HEN Job answered and said, 2, How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? 3. These ten times have ye reproached me: you are not ashamed that you make yourselves strange to me. 4. And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself. 5. If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against my reproach: 6. Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net. 7. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.

Job's friends had passed a very severe censure upon him as a wicked man, because he was so grievously afflicted; now here he tells them how ill he took it to be censured. Bildad had twice begun with a *how long*, chap. xviii. 2. and therefore Job being now to answer him particularly, begins with a *how long* too, *ver. 2.* What is not liked is commonly thought long, but Job had more reason to think them long, who assaulted him, than they had to think him long who only vindicated himself. Better cause may be shewn for defending ourselves, if we have right on our side, than for offending our brethren, though we have a right on our side. Now observe here,

1. How he describes their unkindness to him, and what account he gives of it. (1.) They vexed his soul, and that is more grievous than the vexation of the bones, *Psal. vi. 2, 3.* They were his friends, they came to comfort him, pretended to counsel him for the best; but with a great deal of gravity and affectation of wisdom and piety, they set themselves to rob him of the only comfort he had now left him in a good God, a good conscience, and a good name; and this vexed him to the heart. (2.) They broke him in pieces with words; and those were hard words sure, and very cruel ones, that would break a man to pieces: they grieved him, and so broke him, and therefore there will be a reckoning hereafter for all the hard speeches spoken against Christ and his people, *Jude 18.* (3.) They reproached him, *ver. 3.* gave him an ill character, put him into an ill name, and laid to his charge things that he knew not. To an ingenious mind reproach is a cutting thing. (4.) They made themselves strange to him, were shy of him now he was in his troubles, took on them, they did not know him, chap. ii. 12. were not free with him as they used to be when he was in his prosperity. Those are governed by the spirit of the world, and not by any principles of true honour or love, who make themselves strange to their friends, or God's friends, when they are in trouble: a friend loves at all times. (5.) They not only estranged themselves from him, but aggravated themselves against him, *ver. 5.* not only looked shy of him, but looked big upon him, and insulted over him, magnifying themselves to depress him.

Vol. II. No. LXXIII.

It is a mean thing, it is an ill thing, thus to trample upon those that are down. (6.) They pleaded against him his reproach, i. e. they made use of his afflictions as an argument against him to prove him a wicked man. They should have pleaded for him his integrity, and helped him to take the comfort of that under his affliction, and so have pleaded that against his reproach, as St. Paul, *2 Cor. i. 12.* but, instead of that, they pleaded his reproach against his integrity, which was not only unkind, but very unjust; for where shall we find an honest man if reproach may be admitted for a plea against him?

2. How he aggravates their unkindness. (1.) They had thus abused him often, *ver. 3.* *These ten times ye have reproached me, i. e.* very often, as *Gen. xxxi. 7.* *Numb. xiv. 22.* Five times they had spoken, and every speech was double reproach. He spoke as if he had kept a particular account of their reproaches, and could tell just how many they were: and it is but a peevish and unfriendly thing to do so, and looks like a design of retaliation and revenge: we better befriend our own peace by forgetting injuries and unkindnesses than by booking them and scoring them up. (2.) They continue still to do it, and seemed resolved to persist in it. How long will ye do it? *ver. 2.* and *ver. 5.* I see you will magnify yourselves against me, notwithstanding all I have said in mine own justification. Many times those that speak say too much, yet never think they have said enough; and, when the mouth is opened in passion, the ear is shut to reason. (3.) They were not ashamed of what they did, *ver. 3.* They had reason to be ashamed of their hard-heartedness, so ill becoming men; and their uncharitableness, so ill becoming good men; and their deceitfulness, so ill becoming friends; but were they ashamed? No, though they were told of it again and again, yet they could not blush.

3. How he answers their harsh censures, by shewing them that what they condemned was capable of excuse, which they ought to have considered.

1. The errors of his judgment were excusable, *ver. 4.* *Be it indeed that I have erred,* that I am in the wrong through ignorance or mistake, which may well be supposed concerning men, concerning good men, *Humanum est errare*, and we must be willing to suppose it concerning ourselves. It is folly to think ourselves infallible: but be it so, said Job, *mine error remaineth with myself, i. e.* I speak according to the best of my judgment, with all sincerity, and not from a spirit of contradiction; or, if I be in an error, I keep it to myself, and do not impose it upon others as you do: I only prove myself and my own work by it; I meddle not with other people, either to teach them or to judge them. Men's errors are the more excusable if they keep them to themselves and do not disturb others with them. *Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself.* Some give this sense of these words: If I be in an error, it is I that must smart for it, and therefore you need not concern yourselves; nay, it is I that do smart, and smart severely for it, and therefore you need not add to my misery by your reproaches.

2. The breakings out of his passion, though not justifiable, yet were excusable, considering the vastness of his grief, and the extremity of his misery. If you will go on to cavil at every complaining word I speak, will make the worst of it, and improve it against me, yet take the cause of the complaint along with you, and weigh that before you pass a judgment upon the complaint and turn it to my reproach: know then, that God has overcome me, *ver. 6.* Three things he would have him consider. (1.) That his trouble was very great: he was overthrown, and could not help himself; inclosed as in a net, and could not get out. (2.) That God was the author of it, and that in it he fought against him: it was his hand that overthrew me; it is in his net that I am inclosed, and therefore you need not appear against me thus; I have enough to do to grapple with God's displeasure, let me not have yours also. Let God's controversy with me be ended, for pity, before you begin yours. It is barbarous to persecute him whom God hath smitten, and talk to the grief of one whom he hath wounded, *Psal. lxxix. 26.* (3.) That he could not obtain any hopes of the redress of his grievances, *ver. 7.* He complained of his pain, but got no ease; begged to know the cause of his affliction, but could not discover it; he appealed to God's tribunal for the clearing of his innocence, but could not obtain a hearing, much less a judgment, upon his appeal. *I cry out of wrong, but am not heard.* God for a time may seem to turn away his ear from his people, to be angry at their prayers, and overlook their appeals to him; and they must be excused if in that case they complain bitterly. Wo unto us if God be against us!

8. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths. 9. He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken my crown from my head. 10. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree. 11. He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies. 12. His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle. 13. He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. 14. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. 15. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. 16. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer: I entreated him with my mouth. 17. My breath is strange to my wife, though I entreated for the children's sake of mine own body. 18. Yea, young children despised me: I arose, and they spake against me. 19. All my inward friends abhorred me; and they, whom I loved, are turned against me. 20. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh: and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth. 21. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me. 22. Why do you persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?

Bildad had very disingenuously perverted Job's complaints, by making them the description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, and yet he repeats them here to move their pity, and to work upon their good nature, if they had any left in them.

3. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure which he was under, and which infused the wormwood and gall into his affliction and misery: how doleful are the accents of his complaints, *ver. 18.* *He hath kindled his wrath against me, which flames and troubles me, which burns and pains*



me! What is the fire of hell but the wrath of God? Seared consciences will feel it shortly, but do not fear it now. Enlightened consciences fear it now, but shall not feel it shortly. Job's present apprehension was, that God counted him as one of his enemies, and yet, at the same time God loved him, and gloried in him, as his faithful friend. It is a gross mistake, but a very common one, to think that whom God afflicts he treats as his enemies; whereas, on the contrary, *as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens*: it is the discipline of his sons.

Which way soever Job looked, he thought he saw the tokens of God's displeasure against him.

(1.) Did he look back upon his former prosperity? he saw God's hand putting an end to that, *ver. 9. He has stripped me of my glory*, my wealth, honour, power, and all the opportunity I had of doing good: my children were my glory, but I have lost them; and whatever was a crown to my head, he has taken it from me, and has laid all mine honour in the dust. See the vanity of worldly glory; it is what we may be soon stripped of, and, whatever strips us, we must see and own God's hand in it, and comply with his design.

(2.) Did he look down upon his present troubles? He saw God giving them their commission and their orders to attack him. They are his troops, that act by his direction, which *encamp against me*, *ver. 12.* It did not so much trouble him that his miseries came upon him in troops; as that they were God's troops, in whom it seemed as if God fought against him, and intended his destruction. *God's troops encamped round his tabernacle*, as soldiers lay siege to a strong city, cutting off all provisions from being brought into it, and battering it continually: thus was Job's tabernacle besieged. Time was when God's host encamped round him with safety: *hast not thou made a hedge about him?* Now, on the contrary, they surrounded him to his terror, and *destroyed him on every side*, *ver. 10.*

(3.) Did he look forward for deliverance? he saw the hand of God cutting off all hopes of that, *ver. 8. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass*; I have now no way left to help myself, either to extricate myself out of troubles, or to ease myself under them. Would I make any motion, take any steps towards deliverance, I find *my way hedged up*; I cannot do what I would: nay, if I would please myself with the prospect of a deliverance hereafter, I cannot do it, it is not only out of my reach but out of my sight; *God hath hid darkness in my paths*, and there is none to tell me how long, *Psal. lxxiv. 9.* He concludes, *ver. 10.* I am gone, quite lost and undone, for this world; *my hope hath he removed like a tree*, cut down, or plucked up by the roots, which will never grow again. Hope in this life, is a perishing thing, but the hope of good men, when it is cut off from this world, is but removed like a tree, transplanted from this nursery to the garden of the Lord. We shall have no reason to complain, if God thus remove our hopes from the sand to the rock, from things temporal to things eternal.

2. He complains of the unkindness of his relations, and of all his old acquaintance. In this also he owns the hand of God, *ver. 13. He hath put my brethren far from me*, i.e. He has laid those afflictions upon me, which frighten them from me, and make them stand aloof from my sorrows. As it was their sin, God was not the author of it; it is Satan that alienates men's minds from their brethren in affliction; but, as it was Job's trouble, God ordered it for the completing of his trial; as we must eye the hand of God in all the injuries we receive from our enemies, (the Lord has bidden Shimei curse David,) so also in all the slights and unkindnesses we receive from our friends, which will help us to bear them the more patiently. Every creature is that to us (kind or unkind, comfortable or uncomfortable) which God makes it to be: yet this doth not excuse Job's relations and friends from the guilt of horrid ingratitude and injustice to him, which he had reason to complain of: few would have borne it so well as he did. He takes notice of the unkindness,

(1.) Of his kindred and acquaintance, his neighbours and such as he had formerly been familiar with, who were bound by all the laws of friendship and civility to concern themselves for him: to visit him, and enquire after him, and to be ready to do him all the good offices that lay in their power; yet these were *estranged from him*, *ver. 13.* they took no more care about him than if he had been a stranger whom they never knew: his kinsfolk, that called him cousin and claimed relation to him when he was in prosperity, now failed him; they came short of their former professions of friendship to him, and his present expectations of kindness from them: even his familiar friends, whom he was mindful of, had now forgotten him, had forgotten both his former friendliness to them, and his present miseries: they had heard of his troubles and designed him a visit, but truly they forgot it, so little effected were they with it.

Nay, his inward friends, the men of his secret, whom he was most intimate with, and laid in his bosom, not only forgot him, but abhorred him; kept as far off him as they could because he was poor and could not entertain them as he used to do, and because he was sore and a loathsome spectacle: those whom he loved, and who therefore were worse than publicans if they did not love him now he was in distress, not only turned from him, but were turned against him, and did all they could to make him odious, so to justify themselves in being so strange to him, *ver. 19.* So uncertain is the friendship of men; but, if God be our friend, he will not fail us in the time of need. But let none, that pretend either to humanity or christianity, ever use their friends as Job's friends used him: adversity is the proof of friendship.

2. Of his domestics and family relations: sometimes indeed we find that, beyond our expectation, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; but ordinarily the master of a family expects to be attended on and taken care of by those of his family; even then, when, through weakness of body or mind, he is become despicable to others. But poor Job was misused by his own family, and some of his worst foes were those of his own house. He mentions not his children, they were all dead; and we may suppose that the unkindness of his surviving relations made him lament the death of his children so much the more: if they had been alive (would he think) I should have had comfort in them. As for those that were now about him,

(1.) His own servants slighted him: his maids did not attend him in his illness, but counted him for a stranger and an alien, *ver. 15.* His other servants never heeded him; if he called to them they would not come at his call, but took on them they did not hear him. If he asked them a question, they would not vouchsafe to give him an answer, *ver. 16.* Job had been a good master to them, and did not despise their cause when they pleaded with him, *chap. xxxi. 13.* and yet they were rude to him now, and despised his cause when he pleaded with them. We must not think it strange if we receive ill at the hand of those from whom we have deserved well. Though he was now sickly, yet he was not cross with his servants, and impetuous; as is too common, but he entreated his servants with his mouth, when he had authority to command; and yet they would not be civil to him, neither kind nor just. Note, Those that are sick and in sorrow are apt to take things ill, and be jealous of a slight, and to lay to heart the least unkindness done to them: when Job was in affliction, even his servants neglected him, troubled him.

(2.) But, one would think when all forsook him, the wife of his bosom should have been tender of him: no because he would not curse God and die, as she persuaded him, his breath was strange to her too; she did not care for coming near him, nor took any notice of what he said, *ver. 17.* Though he spoke to her, not with the authority, but with the tenderness, of a husband; did not command, but entreated her by that conjugal love which their children were the pledges of, yet she regarded him not. Some read it, Though I lamented or bemoaned myself for the children, i.e. for the death of the children of my own body; an affliction in which she was equally concerned with him. Now it appeared the devil spared her to him, not only to be his tempter, but to be his tormentor. By what she had said to him at first, *curse God and die*, it appeared she had little religion in her; and what can one expect that is kind and good from those that have not the fear of God before their eyes, and are not governed by conscience?

(3.) Even the little children that were born in his house, the children of his own servants, who were his servants by birth, despised him, and spoke against him; *ver. 18.* though he arose in civility to speak friendly to them, or with authority to check them, they let him know that they neither feared him nor loved him.

3. He complains of the decay of his body; all the beauty and strength of that was gone. When those about him slighted him, if he had been in health, and at ease, he might have enjoyed himself. But he could take as little pleasure in himself as others took in him, *ver. 20. My bone cleaves now to my skin*, as formerly it did to my flesh; this was it that filled him with wrinkles; *chap. xvi. 8.* he was a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Nay, his skin too was almost gone; little remained unbroken but the skin of his teeth, his gums, and perhaps his lips; all the rest was fetched off by his sore toils. See what little reason we have to indulge the body, which, after all our care, may be thus consumed by the diseases which it has in itself the seeds of.

Lastly, upon all these accounts he recommends himself to the compassion of his friends, and justly blames their hardness with him; from this remonstrance of his deplorable case, it was easy to infer,

1. That they ought to pity him, *ver. 21.* This he begs in the most moving melting language that could be, enough (one would think) to break a heart of stone: *have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends*; if ye will do nothing else for me, be sorry for me, and shew some concern for me; *have pity upon me for the hand of God hath touched me*; my case is sad indeed, for I am fallen into the hands of the living God; my spirit is touched with the sense of his wrath, a calamity of all others the most piteous. Note, It becomes friends to pity one another when they are in any trouble, and not shut up the bowels of compassion.

2. That, however, they ought not to persecute him; if they would not ease his affliction by their pity, yet they must not be so barbarous as to add to it by their censures and reproaches, *ver. 22. Why do you persecute me as God?* Sure his rebukes are enough for one man to bear; you need not add your wormwood and gall to the cup of affliction he puts into my hand, it is bitter enough without that; God has a sovereign power over me, and may do what he pleaseth with me, but do you think that you may do so too? No, we must aim to be like the most holy and the most merciful, but not like the most high and most mighty. God gives not account of any of his matters, but we must. If they did delight in his calamity, let them be satisfied with his flesh, which was wasted and gone, but let them not, as if that were too little, wound his spirit, and ruin his good name. Great tenderness is owing to those that are in affliction, especially to those that are troubled in mind.

23. O that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! 24. That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! 25. For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand to the latter day upon the earth. 26. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me. 28. But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me? Be ye afraid of the sword, for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.

In all the conferences, between Job and his friends, we do not find any more weighty and considerable lines than these; would one have expected it? Here is a great deal both of Christ and heaven in these verses: and he, that said such things as these, declared plainly that he sought the better country; that is, the heavenly, as the patriarchs of that age did, *Ileb. xi. 14.* We have here Job's creed, or confession of faith; his belief in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; and the principles of natural religion he had often professed: but here we find him no stranger to revealed religion: though the revelation of the promised seed, and the promised inheritance, was then but discerned like the dawning of the day, yet Job was taught of God to believe in a living Redeemer, and to look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come; for of these doubtless he must be understood: these were the things he comforted himself with the expectation of, and not a deliverance from his trouble, or revival of his happiness in this world, as some would understand him. For, besides that the expressions he here useth of the Redeemer's standing at the latter day upon the earth, of his seeing God, and seeing him for himself, are wretchedly forced, if they be understood of any temporal deliverance, it is very plain that he had no expectation at all of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. He had just now said, that way was fenced up, *ver. 8.* and his hope removed like a tree, *ver. 10.* Nay, and after this he expressed his despair of any comfort in this life, *chap. xxiii. 8, 9.*—xxx. 23. So that we must necessarily understand him of the redemption of his soul from the power of the grave, and his reception to glory, which is spoken of, *Psal. xlix. 15.* We have reason to think that Job was just now under an extraordinary impulse of the blessed Spirit, which raised him above himself, gave him light, and gave him utterance, even to his own surprise. And some observe, that after this we do not find, in Job's discourses, such passionate, peevish, unbecoming, complaints, of God and his providence, as we have before met with: this hope quieted his spirits, stilled the storm, and, having cast anchor within the veil, his mind kept steady from this time forward. Let us observe,

1. To what intent Job makes this confession of his faith here; never did any thing come in more pertinently or to better purpose. (1.) Job was now accused, and this was his appeal. His friends reproached him as a hypocrite, and condemned him as a wicked man; but he appeals to his creed, to his faith, to his hope, and to his own conscience, which not only acquitted



acquitted him from reigning sin, but comforted him with the expectation of a blessed resurrection: *these are the words of him that has a devil. He appeals to the coming of the Redeemer*, from his wrangle at the bar to the judgment of the bench, even to him to whom all judgment is committed, who he knew would right him. The consideration of God's day coming, will make it a very small thing with us to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. How easily may we bear the unjust calamities and reproaches of men, while we expect the glorious appearance of our Redeemer, and his redeemed, at the last day; and that there will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies. (2.) Job was now afflicted, and this was his cordial; when he was pressed above measure, this kept him from fainting, he believed that he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; not in this world, for that is the land of the dying.

2. With what a solemn preface he introduceth it, *ver. 23, 24*. He breaks off his complaint abruptly, to triumph in his comforts; which he doth not only for his own satisfaction, but for the edification of others.—Those now about him he feared would little regard what he said; and so it proved; he therefore wished it might be recorded for the generations to come. *O that my words were now written!* the words that I am now about to say, *q. d.* I own I have spoken many unadvised words, which I could wish might be forgotten, for they will neither do me credit nor do others good. But I am now going to speak deliberately, and that which I desire may be published to all the world, and preserved for the generations to come, *in perpetuum rei memoriam*, and therefore that it might be written plain, and printed, or drawn out in large and legible characters, so that he that runs may read it; and that it may not be left in loose papers, but put into a book; or, if that it should perish, that it may be engraven like an inscription upon a monument, *with an iron pen in lead, or in the stone*; let the engraver use all his art to make it durable, and a lasting appeal to posterity. That which Job here somewhat passionately wished for, God graciously granted him; his words are written, they are printed in God's book; so that wherever that book is read, there shall be this told for a memorial concerning Job, He believed, therefore he spoke.

3. What his confession itself is; what are the words which he would have to be written, we here have them written, *ver. 25, 26, 27*, let us observe them.

1. He believes the glory of the Redeemer, and his own interest in him, *ver. 25*. *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, he is in being, and is my life, and that he shall stand at last, or stand the last, or at the latter day upon (or above) the earth. He shall be raised up, or he shall be (at the latter day, *i. e.* in the fulness of time. The gospel day is called the last time, because that is the last dispensation) upon the earth. So it points at his incarnation; or, he shall be lifted up from the earth. So it points at his crucifixion; or, raised up out of the earth. So it is applicable to his resurrection; or, as we commonly understand it, at the end of time he shall appear over the earth, for *he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him*, so close shall he come to this earth. He shall stand upon the dust, so the word is, upon all his enemies, which shall be put as dust under his feet, and he shall tread upon them and triumph over them.

Observe here, 1. That there is a Redeemer provided for fallen man, and Jesus Christ is that Redeemer. The word is Goel, which is used for the next of kin to whom, by the law of Moses, the right of redeeming a mortgaged estate did belong, *Lev. xxv. 25*. Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin, we are ourselves utterly unable to redeem it, Christ is near of kin to us, the next kinsman that is able to redeem, he has paid our debt, satisfied God's justice for sin, and so has taken off the mortgage, and made a new settlement of the inheritance! Our persons also want a Redeemer, we are sold for sin, and sold under sin, our Lord Jesus has wrought out a redemption for us, and proclaims redemption to us, and so he is truly the Redeemer. 2. He is a living Redeemer: as we are made by a living God, so we are saved by a living Redeemer, who is both almighty and eternal, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost. *Of him it is witnessed that he liveth*, *Heb. vii. 8*. *Rev. i. 18*. We are dying, but he liveth, and hath assured us, that *because he lives we shall live also*, *John xiv. 19*. 3. There are those that through grace have an interest in this Redeemer, and can upon good ground call him theirs. When Job had lost all his wealth, and all his friends, yet he was not separated from Christ, nor cut off from his relation to him: still he is my Redeemer. That next kinsman stuck to him when all his other kindred forsook him, and he had the comfort of it. 4. Our interest in the Redeemer is a thing that may be known, and where it is known may be triumphed in, as sufficient to balance all our griefs. *I know*. Observe with what an air of assurance he speaks it, as one confident of this very thing. *I know that my Redeemer lives*. His friends had often charged him with ignorance or vain knowledge, but he knows enough, and knows to good purpose, who knows Christ to be his Redeemer. 5. There will be a latter day, a last day, a day when *time shall be no more*, *Rev. x. 6*. That is a day we are concerned to think of every day. 6. Our Redeemer will at that day stand upon the earth, or over the earth, to summon the dead out of the graves, and determine them to an unchangeable state; for to him all judgment is committed. He shall stand the last on the dust to which this earth will be reduced by the conflagration.

2. He believes the happiness of the redeemed, and his own title to that happiness, that at Christ's second coming believers shall be raised up in glory, and so made perfectly blessed in the vision and fruition of God, and this he believes with application to himself.

1. He counts upon the corrupting of his body in the grave, and speaks of it with a holy carelessness and unconcernedness, though *after my skin* (which is already wasted and gone, none of it remaining but the skin of his teeth, *ver. 20*) *they destroy*, (they that are appointed to destroy it, the grave, and the worms in it, of whom he had spoken, *chap. xvii. 14*) *this body*. The word *body* is added: though they destroy this, this skeleton, this shadow (*chap. xvii. 7*) this that I lay my hand upon, or (pointing perhaps to his weak and withered limbs) this that you see, call it what you will, I expect that shortly it will be a feast for the worms, Christ's body saw not corruption, but ours must! and Job mentions this that the glory of the resurrection he believed and hoped for might shine the more bright. Note, It is good for us often to think not only of the approaching death of our bodies, but of their destruction and dissolution in the grave; yet let that not discourage our hope of their resurrection, for the same power that made man's body at first out of common dust can raise it out of its own dust. This body we now take such care about, and make such provision for, will in a little time be destroyed, even *my reins*, saith Job, *shall be consumed within me*, *ver. 27*. the innermost part of the body, which perhaps putrifies first.

2. He comforts himself with the hopes of happiness on the other side death and the grave. *After I shall awake* (so the margin reads it) *though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God*.

1. Soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave shall be raised again a glorious body, yet in my flesh I shall see God: the separate soul has eyes wherewith to see God, eyes of the mind; but Job speaks of seeing him with eyes of flesh, in my flesh,

with mine eyes, the same body that died shall rise again, a true body, but a glorified body, fit for the employments and entertainments of that world; and therefore a *spiritual body*, 1 Cor. xv. 44. Let us therefore glorify God with our bodies, because there is such a glory designed for them.

2. Job and God shall come together again; *in my flesh shall I see God*, *i. e.* the glorified Redeemer who is God. *I shall see God in my flesh*, so some read it: the son of God clothed with a body which will be visible even to the eyes of flesh. Though the body in the grave seem despicable and miserable, yet it shall be dignified and made happy in the vision of God. Job now complained that he could not get a sight of God, *chap. xxiii. 8, 9*; but hopes to see him shortly, never more to lose sight of him, and that sight of him will be the more welcome after the present darkness and distance. Note, It is the blessedness of the blessed that they shall see God, shall see him as he is, see him face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly. See with what pleasure holy Job enlargeth upon this, *ver. 27*. *Whom I shall see for myself*, *i. e.* see and enjoy, see to my own unspeakable comfort and satisfaction; I shall see him as mine, as mine with an appropriating sight, *Rev. xxi. 3*. *God himself shall be with them, and be their God*, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is, that is, seeing for themselves, 1 John iii. 2. Mine eyes shall behold him and not another. (1.) He, and not another for him, shall be seen, not a type or figure of him, but he himself. Glorified saints are perfectly sure that they are not imposed upon, it is no *deception*; (2.) I, and not another for me, shall see him. Though my flesh and body be consumed yet I shall not need a proxy, I shall see him with my own eyes. This was what Job hoped for, and what he earnestly desired, which some think is the meaning of the last clause, *my reins are spent in my bosom*, *i. e.* All my desires are summed up and concluded in this, this will crown and complete them all; let me have this, and I shall have nothing more to desire, it is enough, it is all; with this the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

4. The application of this to his friends. His creed spoke comfort to himself, but warning and terror to them that set themselves against him.

1. It was a word of caution to them, not to proceed and persist in their unkind usage of him, *ver. 28*. He had reproved them for what they had said, and now tells them what they should say for the reducing of themselves and one another to a better temper. Why persecute we him thus? why do we grieve him and vex him, by censuring and condemning him, seeing the root of the matter, or the root of the word, is found in him? Let this direct us, (1.) In our care concerning ourselves. We are all concerned to see to it, that the root of the matter be found in us. A living, quickening, commanding principle of grace in the heart is the root of the matter, as necessary to our religion, as the root to the tree, to which it owes both its fixedness and its fruitfulness: love to God and our brethren, faith in Christ, hatred of sin, this is the root of the matter, other things are but leaves in comparison with this; serious godliness is the one thing needful. (2.) In our carriage towards our brethren. We are to believe that many have the root of the matter in them, who are not in every thing of our mind, who have their follies and weaknesses, and mistakes: and to conclude, it is at our peril if we persecute any such. Woe be to him that offends one of those little ones, God will relent and revenge it. Job and his friends differed in some notions concerning the methods of providence, but they agreed in the root of the matter, the belief of another world, and therefore should not persecute one another for these differences.

2. It was a word of terror to them. Christ's second coming will be very dreadful to those that are found *smiting their fellow-servants*, *Matth. xxiv. 49*. and therefore, *ver. 22*. *Be ye afraid of the sword*, the flaming sword of God's justice which turns every way; fear, lest you make yourselves obnoxious to it. Good men need to be frightened from sin by the terrors of the Almighty, particularly from the sin of rash judging their brethren, *Matth. vii. 1*. *Jam. iii. 1*. Those that are peevish and passionate with their brethren, censorious to them, and malicious towards them, let them know, not only that their wrath, whatever it pretends, works not the righteousness of God. But, (1.) They may expect to smart for it in this world; *it brings the punishment of the sword*: wrath leads to such crimes as expose men to the sword of the magistrate; however, God often takes vengeance for it, and those that shewed no mercy shall find no mercy. (2.) If they repent not, that will be an earnest of worse. By these you may know there is a judgment, not only a present government, but a future judgment, in which hard speeches must be accounted for.

## C H A P. XX.

One would have thought that such an excellent confession of faith as Job made in the close of the foregoing chapter should have satisfied his friends, or at least have mollified them; but they do not seem to have taken any notice of it, and therefore Zophar here takes his turn, enters the lists with Job, and attacks him with as much vehemence as before.

(1.) His preface is short, but hot, *ver. 2, 3*. (2.) His discourse is long, and all upon one subject, the very same that Bilgah was large upon, *chap. xviii*. the certain misery of wicked people, and the ruin that awaits them. 1. He asserts in general, that the prosperity of the wicked is short, and their ruin sure, *ver. 4—9*. He proves the misery of his condition by many instances, That he should have a diseased body, a troubled conscience, a ruined estate, beggared family, an infamous name, and he himself shall perish under the weight of divine wrath: all this is most curiously described here in lofty expressions, and lively similitudes, and it often proves true in this world, and always in another, without repentance, *ver. 10—29*. But the great mistake was and (as Bishop Patrick expresseth it) all the flaw in his discourse (which was common to him with the rest) that he imagined God never varied from this method, and therefore Job was without doubt a very bad man, though it did not appear he was, any other way but by his infelicity.

1. THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite; and said, 2. Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer. 4. Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon the earth, 5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? 6. Though his excellency mounts up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds: 7. Yet he shall perish for ever, like his own dung: they which have seen him, shall say, where is he? 8. He shall fly away as a dream, and



and shall not be found : yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. 9. The eye also which saw him, shall see him no more ; neither shall his place any more behold him.

Here, 1. Zophar begins very passionately, and seems to be in a great heat at what Job had said. Being resolved to condemn Job for an ill man, he was much displeased that he talked so like a good man, and, as it should seem, broke in upon him, and began abruptly, *ver. 2. Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer.* He takes no notice of what Job had said to move their pity, or to evidence his own integrity, but fastens upon the reproach he gave them in the close of his discourse, counts that a reproach, and thinks himself therefore obliged to answer, because Job had bid them be afraid of the sword, that he might not seem to be frightened by his menaces. The best counsel is too often ill taken from an antagonist, and therefore usually may be as well spared. Zophar seemed more in haste to speak than became a wise man, but he excuseth it with two things. (1.) That Job had given him a strong provocation, *ver. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach,* and cannot bear to hear it any longer. Job's friends, I doubt, had spirits too high to deal with a man in his low condition, and high spirits are impatient of contradiction, but think themselves affronted if all about them do not say as they say : they cannot bear a check, but they call it the check of their reproach, and then they are bound in honour to return it, if not to draw upon him that gave it. (2.) That his own heart gave him a strong instigation. His thoughts caused him to answer, *ver. 2. for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks ;* but he fathers it, *ver. 3. upon the spirit of his understanding : that indeed should cause us to answer, we should rightly apprehend a thing, and duly consider it before we speak to it ;* but whether it did so here or no is a question : men often mistake the dictates of their passion for the dictates of their reason, and therefore think they do well to be angry.

(2.) Zophar proceeds very plainly to shew the ruin and destruction of wicked people, insinuating that because Job was destroyed and ruined, he was certainly a wicked man, and a hypocrite. Observe,

1. How this doctrine is introduced, *ver. 4. where he appeals, (1.) To Job's own knowledge and conviction, knowest thou not this ? Canst thou be ignorant of a truth so plain ? or canst thou doubt a truth which has been confirmed by the suffrage of all mankind ? Those know little, who do not know that the wages of sin is death.* (2.) To the experience of all ages. It was known of old since man was placed upon the earth, *i. e.* Ever since man was made he has had his truth written in his heart, that the sin of sinners will be their ruin ; and ever since there were instances of wickedness (which there were soon after man was placed on the earth) there were instances of the punishments of it, witness the exclusions of Adam and Cain. When sin entered into the world death entered with it : all the world knows that evil pursues sinners, that *vengeance suffers not to live,* Acts xxviii. 4. and subscribes to that, *Isai. iii. 11. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, sooner or later.*

2. How it is laid down, *ver. 5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.* Observe, 1. He asserts the misery not only of those that are openly wicked and profane, but of hypocrites, who secretly practise wickedness under a shew and profession of religion, because such a wicked man he looked upon Job to be, and it is true, that a form of godliness, if it be made use of for a cloke of maliciousness, doth but make ill worse ; dissembling piety is double iniquity, and the ruin that attends it will be accordingly. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites, as our Saviour intimates, *Matt. xxiv. 51.* 2. He grants that wicked men may for a time prosper, and may be secure and easy, and very merry ; you may see them in triumph and joy, triumphing and rejoicing in their wealth and power, their grandeur and success, triumphing and rejoicing over their poor honest neighbours whom they vex and oppress : they feel no evil, they fear none. Job's friends were loth to own at first that wicked people might prosper at all, *chap. iv. 9. until Job proved it plainly, chap. ix. 24—xii. 6. and now Zophar yields it, but, 3. He lays it down for a certain truth that they will not prosper long. Their joy is but for a moment, and will end in endless sorrow : though he be never so great, and rich and jovial, he will be humbled and mortified, and made miserable.*

3. How it is illustrated, *ver. 6, &c.*

1. He suppoeth his prosperity to be very high, as high as you can imagine, *ver. 6.* It is not his wisdom and virtue, but his worldly wealth and greatness that he accounts his excellency and values himself by : we will suppose that to mount up to the heavens, and since his spirit always riseth with his condition, you may suppose that with it his head reacheth to the clouds. He is every way advanced, the world has done the utmost it can for him, he looks down upon all about him with disdain, while they look up to him with admiration, envy, or fear ; we will suppose him to bid fair for an universal monarchy. And though he cannot but have made himself many enemies before he arrived to this pitch of prosperity, yet he thinks himself as much out of the reach of their darts as if he were in the clouds. (2.) He is confident his ruin will accordingly be very great, and his fall the more dreadful from his having risen so high. *He shall perish for ever, ver. 7.* His pride and security were the certain preludes of his misery. This certainly will be true of all impenitent sinners in the other world ; they shall be undone, for ever undone ; but Zophar means his ruin in this world : and sometimes indeed notorious sinners are remarkably cut off by present judgments ; they have reason enough to fear what Zophar here threatens even the triumphant sinner with. (1.) A shameful destruction. He shall perish like his own dung or dunghill, so loathsome is he to God and all good men, and so willing will the world be to part with him, *Psal. cxix. 119. Isa. lxvi. ult.* (2.) A surprising destruction. He will be brought into desolation in a moment, *Psal. lxxiii. 19.* So that those about him, that saw him but just now, will ask, *where is he ?* Could he that made so great a figure vanish and expire so suddenly ? (3.) A swift destruction, *ver. 8.* He shall fly away upon the wings of his own terrors, and be chased away by the just imprecations of all about him, who would be gladly rid of him. (4.) An utter destruction. It will be total, he shall go away like a dream or vision of the night, which was a mere phantom, and whatever in it pleased the fancy, it is quite gone, and nothing of it remains, but what serves us to laugh at the folly of. It will be final, *ver. 9.* The eye that saw him and was ready to adore him, shall see him no more, and the place he filled shall no more behold him, having given him an eternal farewell when he went to his own place, as Judas. *Acts i. 25.*

10. His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods. 11. His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust. 12. Though wickedness be sweet in

his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue ; 13. Though he spare it, and forsake it not ; but keep it still within his mouth : *For his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him.* 15. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again ; God shall cast them out of his belly. 16. He shall suck the poison of asps : the vipers tongue shall slay him. 17. He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter. 18. That which he laboured for, shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down : according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein. 19. Because he hath oppressed, and hath forsaken the poor ; because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not. 20. Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired. 21. There shall none of his meat be left ; therefore shall no man look for his goods. 22. In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits : every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.

The instances here given of the miserable condition of the wicked man in this world, are expressed with a great fulness and fluency of language, and the same thing returned to again and repeated in other words. Let us therefore reduce the particulars to their proper heads, and observe,

1. What his wickedness is for which he is punished.

(1.) The lusts of the flesh here called the sins of his youth, *ver. 11.* for those are the sins which in that age people are most tempted to. The forbidden pleasures of sense are said to be sweet in his mouth, *ver. 12.* he indulgeth himself in all the gratifications of the carnal appetite, and takes an inordinate complacency in them, as yielding the most agreeable delights. That is the satisfaction which he hides under his tongue, and rolls there, as the most dainty delicate thing that can be : he keeps it still within his mouth, *ver. 13.* let him have that and he desires no more, he will never part with that for the spiritual and divine pleasures of religion, which he has no relish of, nor affection for. His keeping it still in his mouth notes both his obstinate persisting in his sin, he spares it when he should kill and mortify it, and forsakes it not, but holds it fast, and goes on frowardly in it : and also his re-acting of his sin by revolving it, and remembering it with pleasure, as that adulterous woman, *Ezek. xxiii. 19.* that multiplied her whoredoms by calling to remembrance the days of her youth, so doth this wicked man here. Or his hiding it or keeping it under his tongue, notes his industrious concealment of his beloved lust : being an hypocrite, that he may save the credit of his profession, his haunts of sin are secret ; but he that knows what is in the heart, knows what is under the tongue too, and will discover it shortly.

(2.) The love of the world and the wealth of it : that is it in which he placeth his happiness, and which therefore he sets his heart upon. See here, (1.) How greedy he is of it, *ver. 15.* He hath swallowed down riches, as eagerly as ever a hungry man swallowed down meat, and is still crying, Give, give. It is that which he desired, *ver. 20.* it was in his eye the best gift, and that which he coveted earnestly. (2.) What pains he takes for it, it is that which he labours for, *ver. 18.* not by honest diligence in a lawful calling, but by an unwearied prosecution of all ways and methods, right or wrong, *per fas, per nefas,* to be rich. We must not labour to be rich, *Prov. xxiii. 4.* but to be charitable, *that we may have to give,* Eph. iv. 28. not to spend. (3.) What great things he promiseth himself from it, intimated in the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter, *ver. 17.* his being disappointed of them suppoeth he had flattered himself with the hopes of them : he expected rivers of sensual delights.

(3.) Violence and oppression, and injustice to his poor neighbours, *ver. 19.* This was the sin of the giants of the old world, and a sin that, as much as any other, brings God's judgments upon nations and families. It is charged upon this wicked man, (1.) That he had forsaken the poor, taken no care of them, shewed no kindness to them, nor made any provision for them. At first, perhaps for a pretence, he gave alms like the Pharisees, to gain a reputation ; but when he had served his turn with it he left it off, and forsook the poor, whom before he seemed concerned for. Those who do good, but not from a good principle, though they may abound in it will not abide it. (2.) That he has oppressed them, crushed them, taken all advantages against them to do them a mischief : to enrich himself he has robbed the spittle, and made the poor poorer. (3.) That he hath violently taken away their houses, which he had no right to, as Ahab took Naboth's vineyard, not by secret fraud, by forgery, perjury, or some trick in law, but avowedly, and by open violence.

(2.) What his punishment is for this wickedness.

1. He shall be disappointed in his expectations, and shall not find that satisfaction in his worldly wealth which he vainly promised himself, *ver. 17. He shall never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter with which he hoped to glut himself.* The world is not that to those who love it, and court, and admire it, which they fancy it will be. The enjoyment sinks far below the raised expectation.

2. He shall be diseased and disordered in his body : and what little comfort can a man have in wealth if he have not health ? Sickness and pain, especially if they be in extremity, imbitter all his enjoyments. This wicked man has all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable, but what the nearer, when his bones are full of the sins of his youth, *ver. 11. i. e.* of the effects of those sins. By his drunkenness and gluttony, his uncleanness and wantonness when he was young, he contracted those diseases, which are painful to him long after, and, perhaps make his life very miserable, and as Solomon speaks, consumes his flesh and his body, *Prov. v. 11.* Perhaps he was given to fight when he was young, and then made nothing of a cut or a bruise in a fray, but he feels it in his bones long after. But can he get no ease or relief ? No, he is like to carry his pains and diseases with him to the grave, or rather, they are likely to carry him thither, and so the sins of his youth shall lie down with him in the dust : the very putrifying of his body in the grave is to him the effect of sin, *chap. xxiv. 19.* So that his iniquity is upon his bones there, *Ezek. xxxii. 27.* The sin of sinners follows them to the other side death.

3. He shall be disquieted and troubled in his mind. *Surely shall he not feel quietness in his belly,* *ver. 20.* He has not that ease in his own mind that people think he has, but is in a continual toss. The ill-got wealth, which he has swallowed down makes him sick at his stomach, and like undigested meat is always upbraiding him. Let none expect to enjoy that comfortably



comfortably which they have got unjustly. The quietness of his mind ariseth, (1.) From his conscience looking back, and filling him with the fear of the wrath of God against him, for his wickedness. Even that wickedness which was sweet in the commission, and was rolled under the tongue as a delicate morsel, becomes bitter in the reflection, and when it is reviewed fills him with horror and vexation. In his bowels it is turned, *ver. 14.* like John's book, *in his mouth as sweet as honey, but when he had eaten it his belly was bitter*, Rev. x. 10. Such a thing is sin, it is turned into the gall of asps, than which nothing is more bitter, the poison of asps, *ver. 16.* than which nothing is more fatal, and so it will be to him: what he sucked so sweetly, and with so much pleasure, will prove to him the poison of asps; so will all unlawful gains be. The fawning tongue will prove the viper's tongue. All the charming graces that are thought to be in sin, when conscience is awakened, will turn into so many raging fires. (2.) From his cares, looking forwards, *ver. 22.* In the fullness of his sufficiency, when he thinks himself most happy, and most sure of the continuance of his happiness, he shall be in straits, *i. e.* he shall think himself so, through the anxieties and perplexities of his own hand, as that rich man, who when his ground brought forth plentifully, cried out, *What shall I do?* Luke xii. 17.

4. He shall be dispossessed of his estate: that shall sink and dwindle away to nothing, so that he shall not rejoice therein, *ver. 18.* He shall not only never rejoice truly, but not long enjoy it at all.

(1.) What he has unjustly swallowed he shall be compelled to disgorge, *ver. 15.* He hath swallowed down riches, and then thought himself sure of them, and that they were as much his own as the meat he has eaten, but he is deceived, he shall vomit them up again: his own conscience perhaps may make him so easy in the keeping of what he has got, that for the quiet of his own mind he shall make restitution, and that not with the pleasure of a virtue, but the pain of a vomit, and with the utmost reluctance. Or, if he do not himself refund what he has violently taken away, God shall by his providence force him to it, and bring it about one way or other, that ill gotten goods shall return to the right owners: God shall cast them out of his belly, while yet the love of the sin is not cast out of his heart. So loud shall the clamours of the poor be against him whom he has impoverished, that he shall be forced to send his children to them to speak them fair, and beg their pardon, *ver. 10.* *His children shall seek to please the poor*, whilst his own hands shall restore them their goods with shame, *ver. 18.* That which he laboured for by all the arts of oppression shall be restore, and shall not so swallow it down as to digest it; it shall not stay with him, but according to his shame shall the restitution be; having gotten a great deal unjustly, he shall restore a great deal: so that when every body has their own, he will have but a little left for himself. To be made to restore what was unjustly gotten, by the sanctifying grace of God, as Zaccheus was, is a great mercy; he voluntarily and cheerfully restored four fold, and yet had a great deal left to give to the poor, Luke xix. 8. But to be forced to restore as Judas was, merely by the horrors of a despairing conscience, has none of that benefit and comfort attending it, for he *threw down the pieces of silver, and went and hanged himself*.

(2.) He shall be stripped of all he has, and become a beggar. He that spoiled others shall himself be spoiled, *Isa. xxxiii. 1.* *for every hand of the wicked shall be upon him.* The innocent whom he has wronged sit down by their loss, saying, as David, *wickedness proc. evil from the wicked, but my hand shall not be upon him*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. But though they have forgiven him, though they will make no reprisals, divine justice will, and oftentimes makes the wicked to avenge the quarrel of the righteous, and squeezes and crushes one ill man by the hand of another upon him. Thus when he is plucked of all sides, he shall not face of that which he desired, *ver. 20.* Not only not have it all, but have nothing of it. There shall none of his meat (which he coveted so much, and fed upon with so much pleasure) be left, *ver. 21.* All his neighbours and relations shall look upon him to be in such all circumstances, that when he is dead no man shall look for his goods, none of his kindred shall expect to be a penny the better for him, nor be willing to take out letters of administration of what he leaves behind him. In all this Zophar reflects upon Job, who had lost all, and was reduced to the last extremity.

23. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him and shall rain it upon him, while he is eating. 24. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. 25. It is drawn and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gail; terrors are upon him. 26. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. 27. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him. 28. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. 29. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.

Zophar having described the many embarrassments and vexations which commonly attend the wicked practices of oppressors and cruel men, here comes to shew their utter ruin at last.

1. Their ruin will take its rise from God's wrath and vengeance, *ver. 23.* The hand of the wicked was upon him, *ver. 22.* Every hand of the wicked. His hand was against every one, and therefore every man's hand will be against him, and yet in grappling with these he might go near to make his part good: but his heart cannot endure, nor his hand be strong when God shall deal with him, *Ezek. xxii. 14.* when God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and rain it upon him. Every word here speaks terror. It is not only the justice of God that is engaged against him, but his wrath, the deep resentment of provocations given to himself: it is the fury of his wrath, incensed to the highest degree: it is cast upon him with force and fierceness; it is rained upon him in abundance, it comes on his head like the fire and brimstone upon Sodom, to which the Psalmist also refers, *Psal. xi. 6.* *On the wicked God shall rain fire and brimstone*, and there is no fence against it but only in Christ, who is the only covert from the storm and tempest, *Isa. xxxii. 2.* This wrath shall be cast upon him when he is about to fill his belly, just going to glut himself upon what he has got, and promising himself abundant satisfaction in it. Then when he is eating shall this tempest surprise him, when he is secure and easy and in apprehension of no danger; as the ruin of the old world and Sodom came, when they were in the depth of their security, and the height of their sensuality, as Christ observes, *Luke xvii. 26, &c.* Perhaps Zophar here

reflects on the death of Job's children when they were eating and drinking.

2. Their ruin will be inevitable, and there will be no possibility of escaping it, *ver. 24.* *He shall flee from the iron weapon.* Flight argues guilt: he will not humble himself under the judgments of God, nor seek means to make his peace with him: all his care is to outrun the vengeance that pursues him; but in vain: if he escape the sword, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through. God has weapons of all sorts, he has both *whet his sword and bent his bow*, *Psal. vii. 12, 13.* can deal with his enemies (*cominus* or *eminus*) at hand or afar off. He has a sword for those that think to fight it out with him by their strength, and a bow for those that think to avoid him by their craft. See *Isa. xxiv. 17, 18.* *Jer. xlviii. 43, 44.* He that is marked for ruin, though he may escape one judgment, will find another ready for him.

3. It will be a total terrible ruin. When the dart that has struck him through (for when God shoots he is sure to hit his mark, when he strikes he strikes home) comes to be drawn out of his body, when the glittering sword (the lightning, so the word is) the flaming sword, the sword that is bathed in heaven, (*Isa. xxxiv. 5.*) when this comes out of his gail, O what terrors are upon him! How strong are the convulsions, how violent are the dying agonies! How terrible are the arrests of death to a wicked man!

4. Sometimes it is a ruin that comes upon him insensibly, *ver. 26.* (1.) The darkness he is wrapt up in is a hidden darkness: it is all darkness, utter darkness, without the least mixture of light, and it is hid in a secret place, whither he is retreated, and where he hopes to shelter himself; he never retires into his own conscience but he finds himself in the dark and utterly at a loss. (2.) The fire he is consumed by is a fire not blown, kindled without noise, a consumption which every body sees the effect of, but nobody sees the cause of: it is plain the ground is withered, but the worm at the root that withers it is out of sight. He is wasted by a soft gentle fire, surely, but very slowly. When the fuel is very combustible, the fire needs no blowing, and that is his case: he is ripe for ruin: *the proud and they that do wickedly, shall be stubble*, *Mal. iv. 1.* An unquenchable fire shall consume him, so some read it; and that is certainly true of hell-fire.

5. It is a ruin not only to himself but to his family: *it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle*, for the curse shall reach him, and he shall be cut off perhaps by the same grievous disease: there is an entail of wrath upon the family, which will destroy both his heirs and his inheritance, *ver. 28.* (1.) His posterity shall be rooted out. The increase of his house shall depart; shall either be cut off by untimely deaths, or forced to run their country. Numerous and growing families, if wicked and vile, are soon reduced, dispersed and extirpated, by the judgments of God. (2.) His estate will be sunk. His goods shall flow away from his family as fast as ever they flowed into it. When the day of God's wrath comes, for which all the while his estate was in the getting by fraud and oppression, he was treasuring up wrath.

6. It is again which will manifestly appear to be just and righteous, and what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness, for, *ver. 27.* *The heaven shall reveal his iniquity.* *i. e.* the God of heaven, who sees all the secret wickedness of the wicked, will by some means or other let all the world know what an ill man he has been, that they may own the justice of God in all that is brought upon him. The earth also shall rise up against him, both to discover his wickedness, and to avenge it. *The earth shall disclose her blood*, *Isa. xxvi. 21.* *The earth riseth up against him*, (as the stomach riseth against that which is loathsome to spit it out) and will no longer keep him: *the heaven reveals his iniquity*, and therefore will not receive him, whither then must he go but to hell? If the God of heaven and earth be his enemy, neither heaven nor earth will shew him any kindness, but all the hosts of both are, and will be, at war with him.

Lastly, Zophar concludes like an orator, *ver. 29.* *This is the portion of a wicked man from God*, it is allotted him, it is designed him, as his portion. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity, it is what he must abide by: *this is the heritage of his decree from God*; it is the settled rule of his judgment, and fair warning is given of it. *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die!* *Ezek. xxxiii. 8.* Though impenitent sinners do not always fall under such temporal judgments as are here described, (therein Zophar was mistaken) yet the wrath of God abides upon them, and they are made miserable by spiritual judgments, which are much worse, their consciences being either on the one hand a terror to them, and then they are in continual amazement, or on the other hand feared and silenced, and then they are given up to a prostrate sense, and bound over to eternal ruin. Never was any doctrine better explained, nor worse applied than this here by Zophar, who intended all this to prove Job an hypocrite. Let us receive the good explication, and make a better application, for warning to ourselves to stand in awe, and not to sin.

## C H A P. XXI.

This is Job's reply to Zophar's discourse; in which he complains less of his own miseries, than he had done in his former discourses, finding that his friends were not moved by his complaints, to pity him in the least, and comes closer to the general question that was in dispute between him and them, whether outward prosperity, and the continuance of it was the mark of the true church, and the true members of it, so that the ruin of a man's prosperity is sufficient to prove him an hypocrite, though no other evidence appear against him: this they asserted, but Job denied. (1.) His preface here is designed for the moving of their affections, that he might gain their attention, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) His discourse is designed for the convincing of their judgment, and the rectifying of their mistakes. He owns that God does sometimes hang up a wicked man as it were in chains, in terror, by some visible remarkable judgment in this life, but denies that he always doth so; nay, he maintains that commonly he doth otherwise, suffering even the worst of sinners to live all their days in prosperity, and to go out of the world without any visible mark of wrath upon them. (1.) He describes the great prosperity of wicked people, *ver. 7—13.* (2.) He shews their great impiety, in which they are hardened by their prosperity, *ver. 14—16.* (3.) He foretells their ruin at length, but after a long reprieve, *ver. 17—21.* (4.) He observes a very great variety in the ways of God's providence towards men, even towards bad men, *ver. 22—26.* (5.) He overthrows the ground of their severe censures of him, by shewing that the destruction is reserved for the other world, but that they many times escape to the last in this world, *ver. 27.* ad finem. And in this Job was clearly in the right.

1. BUT Job answered and said, 2 Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations. 3. Suffer me that I may speak, and after that I have spoken



and shall not be found : yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night. 9. The eye also which saw him, shall see him no more ; neither shall his place any more behold him.

Here, 1. Zophar begins very passionately, and seems to be in a great heat at what Job had said. Being resolved to condemn Job for an ill man, he was much displeased that he talked so like a good man, and, as it should seem, broke in upon him, and began abruptly, *ver. 2. Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer.* He takes no notice of what Job had said to move their pity, or to evidence his own integrity, but sustains upon the reproach he gave them in the close of his discourse, counts that a reproach, and thinks himself therefore obliged to answer, because Job had bid them be afraid of the sword, that he might not seem to be frightened by his menaces. The best counsel is too often ill taken from an antagonist, and therefore usually may be as well spared. Zophar seemed more in haste to speak than became a wise man, but he excuseth it with two things. (1.) That Job had given him a strong provocation, *ver. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach,* and cannot bear to hear it any longer. Job's friends, I doubt, had spirits too high to deal with a man in his low condition, and high spirits are impatient of contradiction, but think themselves affronted if all about them do not say as they say : they cannot bear a check, but they call it the check of their reproach, and then they are bound in honour to return it, if not to draw upon him that gave it. (2.) That his own heart gave him a strong instigation. His thoughts caused him to answer, *ver. 2. for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks ;* but he fathers it, *ver. 3. upon the spirit of his understanding ;* that indeed should cause us to answer, we should rightly apprehend a thing, and duly consider it before we speak to it ; but whether it did so here or no is a question : men often mistake the dictates of their passion for the dictates of their reason, and therefore think they do well to be angry.

(2.) Zophar proceeds very plainly to shew the ruin and destruction of wicked people, insinuating that because Job was destroyed and ruined, he was certainly a wicked man, and a hypocrite. Observe,

1. How this doctrine is introduced, *ver. 4. where he appeals, (1.) To Job's own knowledge and conviction, knowest thou not this ?* Canst thou be ignorant of a truth so plain ? or canst thou doubt a truth which has been confirmed by the suffrage of all mankind ? Those know little, who do not know that the wages of sin is death. (2.) To the experience of all ages. It was known of old since man was placed upon the earth, *i. e.* Ever since man was made he has had his truth written in his heart, that the sin of sinners will be their ruin ; and ever since there were instances of wickedness (which there were soon after man was placed on the earth) there were instances of the punishments of it, witness the exclusions of Adam and Cain. When sin entered into the world death entered with it : all the world knows that evil pursues sinners, that *vengeance suffers not to live*, Acts xxviii. 4. and subscribes to that, *Isai. iii. 11. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, sooner or later.*

2. How it is laid down, *ver. 5. That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.* Observe, 1. He asserts the misery not only of those that are openly wicked and profane, but of hypocrites, who secretly practise wickedness under a shew and profession of religion, because such a wicked man he looked upon Job to be, and it is true, that a form of godliness, if it be made use of for a cloke of maliciousness, doth but make ill worse ; dissembling piety is double iniquity, and the ruin that attends it will be accordingly. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites, as our Saviour intimates, *Matt. xxiv. 51.* 2. He grants that wicked men may for a time prosper, and may be secure and easy, and very merry ; you may see them in triumph and joy, triumphing and rejoicing in their wealth and power, their grandeur and success, triumphing and rejoicing over their poor honest neighbours whom they vex and oppress : they feel no evil, they fear none. Job's friends were loth to own at first that wicked people might prosper at all, *chap. iv. 9. until Job proved it plainly, chap. ix. 24—xii. 6. and now Zophar yields it, but, 3. He lays it down for a certain truth that they will not prosper long.* Their joy is but for a moment, and will end in endless sorrow : though he be never so great, and rich and jovial, he will be humbled and mortified, and made miserable.

3. How it is illustrated, *ver. 6, &c.*

1. He supposeth his prosperity to be very high, as high as you can imagine, *ver. 6.* It is not his wisdom and virtue, but his worldly wealth and greatness that he accounts his excellency and values himself by : we will suppose that to mount up to the heavens, and since his spirit always riseth with his condition, you may suppose that with it his head reacheth to the clouds. He is every way advanced, the world has done the utmost it can for him, he looks down upon all about him with disdain, while they look up to him with admiration, envy, or fear ; we will suppose him to bid fair for an universal monarchy. And though he cannot but have made himself many enemies before he arrived to this pitch of prosperity, yet he thinks himself as much out of the reach of their darts as if he were in the clouds. (2.) He is confident his ruin will accordingly be very great, and his fall the more dreadful from his having risen so high. *He shall perish for ever, ver. 7.* His pride and security were the certain presages of his misery. This certainly will be true of all impenitent sinners in the other world ; they shall be undone, for ever undone : but Zophar means his ruin in this world : and sometimes indeed notorious sinners are remarkably cut off by present judgments ; they have reason enough to fear what Zophar here threatens even the triumphant sinner with. (1.) A shameful destruction. He shall perish like his own dung or dunghill, so loathsome is he to God and all good men, and so willing will the world be to part with him, *Psal. cxix. 119. Isa. lxvi. ult.* (2.) A surprising destruction. He will be brought into desolation in a moment, *Psal. lxxiii. 19.* So that those about him, that saw him but just now, will ask, *where is he ?* Could he that made so great a figure vanish and expire so suddenly ? (3.) A swift destruction, *ver. 8.* He shall fly away upon the wings of his own terrors, and be chased away by the just imprecations of all about him, who would be gladly rid of him. (4.) An utter destruction. It will be total, he shall go away like a dream or vision of the night, which was a mere phantom, and whatever in it pleased the fancy, it is quite gone, and nothing of it remains, but what serves us to laugh at the folly of. It will be final, *ver. 9.* The eye that saw him and was ready to adore him, shall see him no more, and the place he filled shall no more behold him, having given him an eternal farewell when he went to his own place, as *Judas. Acts i. 25.*

10. His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods. 11. His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust. 12. Though wickedness be sweet in

his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue ; 13. Though he spare it, and forsake it not ; but keep it still within his mouth : For his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. 15. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again ; God shall cast them out of his belly. 16. He shall suck the poison of asps : the vipers tongue shall slay him. 17. He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter. 18. That which he laboured for, shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down : according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein. 19. Because he hath oppressed, and hath forsaken the poor ; because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not. 20. Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired. 21. There shall none of his meat be left ; therefore shall no man look for his goods. 22. In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits : every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.

The instances here given of the miserable condition of the wicked man in this world, are expressed with a great fulness and fluency of language, and the same thing returned to again and repeated in other words. Let us therefore reduce the particulars to their proper heads, and observe,

1. What his wickedness is for which he is punished.

(1.) The lusts of the flesh here called the sins of his youth, *ver. 11.* for those are the sins which in that age people are most tempted to. The forbidden pleasures of sense are said to be sweet in his mouth, *ver. 12.* he indulgeth himself in all the gratifications of the carnal appetite, and takes an inordinate complacency in them, as yielding the most agreeable delights. That is the satisfaction which he hides under his tongue, and rolls there, as the most dainty delicate thing that can be : he keeps it still within his mouth, *ver. 13.* let him have that and he desires no more, he will never part with that for the spiritual and divine pleasures of religion, which he has no relish of, nor affection for. His keeping it still in his mouth notes both his obstinate persisting in his sin, he spares it when he should kill and mortify it, and forsakes it not, but holds it fast, and goes on srowardly in it : and also his re-acting of his sin by revolving it, and remembering it with pleasure, as that adulterous woman, *Ezek. xxiii. 19.* that multiplied her whoredoms by calling to remembrance the days of her youth, so doth this wicked man here. Or his hiding it or keeping it under his tongue, notes his industrious concealment of his beloved lust : being an hypocrite, that he may save the credit of his profession, his haunts of sin are secret ; but he that knows what is in the heart, knows what is under the tongue too, and will discover it shortly.

(2.) The love of the world and the wealth of it : that is it in which he placeth his happiness, and which therefore he sets his heart upon. See here, (1.) How greedy he is of it, *ver. 15.* He hath swallowed down riches, as eagerly as ever a hungry man swallowed down meat, and is still crying, Give, give. It is that which he desired, *ver. 20.* it was in his eye the best gift, and that which he coveted earnestly. (2.) What pains he takes for it, it is that which he labours for, *ver. 18.* not by honest diligence in a lawful calling, but by an unwearied prosecution of all ways and methods, right or wrong, *per fas, per nefas,* to be rich. We must not labour to be rich, *Prov. xxiii. 4.* but to be charitable, *that we may have to give, Eph. iv. 28.* not to spend. (3.) What great things he promiseth himself from it, intimated in the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter, *ver. 17.* his being disappointed of them supposeth he had flattered himself with the hopes of them : he expected rivers of sensual delights.

(3.) Violence and oppression, and injustice to his poor neighbours, *ver. 19.* This was the sin of the giants of the old world, and a sin that, as much as any other, brings God's judgments upon nations and families. It is charged upon this wicked man ; (1.) That he had forsaken the poor, taken no care of them, shewed no kindness to them, nor made any provision for them. At first, perhaps for a pretence, he gave alms like the Pharisees, to gain a reputation ; but when he had served his turn with it he left it off, and forsook the poor, whom before he seemed concerned for. Those who do good, but not from a good principle, though they may abound in it will not abide in it. (2.) That he has oppressed them, crushed them, taken all advantages against them to do them a mischief : to enrich himself he has robbed the spittle, and made the poor poorer. (3.) That he hath violently taken away their houses, which he had no right to, as Ahab took Naboth's vineyard, not by secret fraud, by forgery, perjury, or some trick in law, but avowedly, and by open violence.

(2.) What his punishment is for this wickedness.

1. He shall be disappointed in his expectations, and shall not find that satisfaction in his worldly wealth which he vainly promised himself ; *ver. 17. He shall never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter* with which he hoped to glut himself. The world is not that to those who love it, and court, and admire it, which they fancy it will be. The enjoyment sinks far below the raised expectation.

2. He shall be diseased and disordered in his body : and what little comfort can a man have in wealth if he have not health ? Sickness and pain, especially if they be in extremity, imbitter all his enjoyments. This wicked man has all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurable, but what the nearer, when his bones are full of the sins of his youth, *ver. 11. i. e.* of the effects of those sins. By his drunkenness and gluttony, his uncleanness and wantonness when he was young, he contracted those diseases, which are painful to him long after, and, perhaps make his life very miserable, and as Solomon speaks, consumes his flesh and his body, *Prov. v. 11.* Perhaps he was given to fight when he was young, and then made nothing of a cut or a bruise in a fray, but he feels it in his bones long after. But can he get no ease or relief ? No, he is like to carry his pains and diseases with him to the grave, or rather, they are likely to carry him thither, and so the sins of his youth shall lie down with him in the dust : the very putrifying of his body in the grave is to him the effect of sin, *chap. xxiv. 19.* So that his iniquity is upon his bones there, *Ezek. xxxii. 27.* The sin of sinners follows them to the other side death.

3. He shall be disquieted and troubled in his mind. Surely shall he not feel quietness in his belly, *ver. 20.* He has not that ease in his own mind that people think he has, but is in a continual toss. The ill-got wealth, which he has swallowed down makes him sick at his stomach, and like undigested meat is always upbraiding him. Let none expect to enjoy that comfortably.



comfortably which they have got unjustly. The quietness of his mind ariseth, (1.) From his conscience looking back, and filling him with the fear of the wrath of God against him, for his wickedness. Even that wickedness which was sweet in the commission, and was rolled under the tongue as a delicate morsel, becomes bitter in the reflection, and when it is reviewed fills him with horror and vexation. In his bowels it is turned, *ver. 14.* like John's book, *in his mouth as sweet as honey*, but *when he had eaten it his belly was bitter*, Rev. x. 10. Such a thing is sin, it is turned into the gall of asps, than which nothing is more bitter, the poison of asps, *ver. 16.* than which nothing is more fatal, and so it will be to him: what he sucked so sweetly, and with so much pleasure, will prove to him the poison of asps; so will all unlawful gains be. The sawing tongue will prove the viper's tongue. All the charming graces that are thought to be in sin, when conscience is awakened, will turn into so many raging fires. (2.) From his cares, looking forwards, *ver. 22.* In the fullness of his sufficiency, when he thinks himself most happy, and most sure of the continuance of his happiness, he shall be in straits, *i. e.* he shall think himself so, through the anxieties and perplexities of his own hand, as that rich man, who when his ground brought forth plentifully, cried out, *What shall I do?* Luke xii. 17.

4. He shall be dispossessed of his estate: that shall sink and dwindle away to nothing, so that he shall not rejoice therein, *ver. 18.* He shall not only never rejoice truly, but not long enjoy it at all.

(1.) What he has unjustly swallowed he shall be compelled to disgorge, *ver. 15.* He hath swallowed down riches, and then thought himself sure of them, and that they were as much his own as the meat he has eaten, but he is deceived, he shall vomit them up again: his own conscience perhaps may make him so easy in the keeping of what he has got, that for the quiet of his own mind he shall make restitution, and that not with the pleasure of a virtue, but the pain of a vomit, and with the utmost reluctance. Or, if he do not himself refund what he has violently taken away, God shall by his providence force him to it, and bring it about one way or other, that ill gotten goods shall return to the right owners: God shall cast them out of his belly, while yet the love of the sin is not cast out of his heart. So loud shall the clamours of the poor be against him whom he has impoverished, that he shall be forced to send his children to them to speak them fair, and beg their pardon, *ver. 10.* *His children shall seek to please the poor*, whilst his own hands shall restore them their goods with shame, *ver. 18.* That which he laboured for by all the arts of oppression shall he restore, and shall not so swallow it down as to digest it; it shall not stay with him, but according to his shame shall the restitution be; having gotten a great deal unjustly, he shall restore a great deal: so that when every body has their own, he will have but a little left for himself. To be made to restore what was unjustly gotten, by the sanctifying grace of God, as Zaccheus was, is a great mercy; he voluntarily and cheerfully restored four fold, and yet had a great deal left to give to the poor, Luke xix. 8. But to be forced to restore as Judas was, merely by the horrors of a despairing conscience, has none of that benefit and comfort attending it, for he *threw down the pieces of silver, and went and hanged himself.*

(2.) He shall be stripped of all he has, and become a beggar. He that spoiled others shall himself be spoiled, *Ista. xxxiii. 1.* *for every hand of the wicked shall be upon him.* The innocent whom he has wronged sit down by their loss, crying, as David, *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but my hand shall not be upon him*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. But though they have forgiven him, though they will make no reprisals, divine justice will, and oftentimes makes the wicked to avenge the quarrel of the righteous, and squeezes and crushes one ill man by the hand of another upon him. Thus when he is plucked of all sides, he shall not save of that which he desired, *ver. 20.* Not only not save it all, but save nothing of it. There shall none of his meat (which he coveted so much, and fed upon with so much pleasure) be left, *ver. 21.* All his neighbours and relations shall look upon him to be in such ill circumstances, that when he is dead no man shall look for his goods, none of his kindred shall expect to be a penny the better for him, nor be willing to take out letters of administration of what he leaves behind him. In all this Zophar reflects upon Job, who had lost all, and was reduced to the last extremity.

23. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him and shall rain it upon him, while he is eating. 24. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. 25. It is drawn and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall; terrors are upon him. 26. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. 27. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him. 28. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. 29. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.

Zophar having described the many embarrassments and vexations which commonly attend the wicked practices of oppressors and cruel men, here comes to shew their utter ruin at last.

1. Their ruin will take its rise from God's wrath and vengeance, *ver. 23.* The hand of the wicked was upon him, *ver. 22.* Every hand of the wicked. His hand was against every one, and therefore every man's hand will be against him, and yet in grappling with these he might go near to make his part good: but his heart cannot endure, nor his hand be strong when God shall deal with him, Ezek. xxii. 14. when God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and rain it upon him. Every word here speaks terror. It is not only the justice of God that is engaged against him, but his wrath, the deep resentment of provocations given to himself: it is the fury of his wrath, incensed to the highest degree: it is cast upon him with force and fierceness; it is rained upon him in abundance, it comes on his head like the fire and brimstone upon Sodom, to which the Psalmist also refers, *Psal. xi. 6.* *On the wicked God shall rain fire and brimstone*, and there is no fence against it but only in Christ, who is the only covert from the storm and tempest, *Ista. xxxii. 2.* This wrath shall be cast upon him when he is about to fill his belly, just going to glut himself upon what he has got, and promising himself abundant satisfaction in it. Then when he is eating shall this tempest surprise him, when he is secure and easy and in apprehension of no danger; as the ruin of the old world and Sodom came, when they were in the depth of their security, and the height of their sensuality, as Christ observes, *Luke xvii. 26, &c.* Perhaps Zophar here

reflects on the death of Job's children when they were eating and drinking.

2. Their ruin will be inevitable, and there will be no possibility of escaping it, *ver. 24.* *He shall flee from the iron weapon.* Flight argues guilt: he will not humble himself under the judgments of God, nor seek means to make his peace with him: all his care is to outrun the vengeance that pursues him; but in vain: if he escape the sword, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through. God has weapons of all sorts, he has both *whet his sword and bent his bow*, *Psal. vii. 12, 13.* can deal with his enemies (*cominus* or *eminus*) at hand or afar off. He has a sword for those that think to fight it out with him by their strength, and a bow for those that think to avoid him by their craft. See *Ista. xxiv. 17, 18.* *Ser. xlviii. 43, 44.* He that is marked for ruin, though he may escape one judgment, will find another ready for him.

3. It will be a total terrible ruin. When the dart that has struck him through (for when God shoots he is sure to hit his mark, when he strikes he strikes home) comes to be drawn out of his body, when the glittering sword (the lightning, so the word is) the flaming sword, the sword that is bathed in heaven, (*Ista. xxxiv. 5.*) when this comes out of his gall, O what terrors are upon him! How strong are the convulsions, how violent are the dying agonies! How terrible are the arrests of death to a wicked man!

4. Sometimes it is a ruin that comes upon him insensibly, *ver. 26.* (1.) The darkness he is wrapt up in is a hidden darkness: it is all darkness, utter darkness, without the least mixture of light, and it is hid in a secret place, whither he is retreated, and where he hopes to shelter himself; he never retires into his own conscience but he finds himself in the dark and utterly at a loss. (2.) The fire he is consumed by is a fire not blown, kindled without noise, a consumption which every body sees the effect of, but nobody sees the cause of: it is plain the ground is withered, but the worm at the root that withers it is out of sight. He is wasted by a soft gentle fire, surely, but very slowly. When the fuel is very combustible, the fire needs no blowing, and that is his case: he is ripe for ruin: *the proud and they that do wickedly, shall be stubble*, Mal. iv. 1. An unquenchable fire shall consume him, so some read it; and that is certainly true of hell-fire.

5. It is a ruin not only to himself but to his family: *it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle*, for the curse shall reach him, and he shall be cut off perhaps by the same grievous disease: there is an entail of wrath upon the family, which will destroy both his heirs and his inheritance, *ver. 28.* (1.) His posterity shall be rooted out. The increase of his house shall depart; shall either be cut off by untimely deaths, or forced to run their country. Numerous and growing families, if wicked and vile, are soon reduced, dispersed and extirpated, by the judgments of God. (2.) His estate will be sunk. His goods shall flow away from his family as fast as ever they flowed into it. When the day of God's wrath comes, for which all the while his estate was in the getting by fraud and oppression, he was treasuring up wrath.

6. It is again which will manifestly appear to be just and righteous, and what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness, for, *ver. 27.* *The heaven shall reveal his iniquity*, *i. e.* the God of heaven, who sees all the secret wickedness of the wicked, will by some means or other let all the world know what an ill man he has been, that they may own the justice of God in all that is brought upon him. The earth also shall rise up against him, both to discover his wickedness, and to avenge it. *The earth shall disclose her blood*, *Ista. xxvi. 21.* *The earth riseth up against him*, (as the stomach riseth against that which is loathsome to spit it out) and will no longer keep him: *the heaven reveals his iniquity*, and therefore will not receive him, whither then must he go but to hell? If the God of heaven and earth be his enemy, neither heaven nor earth will shew him any kindness, but all the hosts of both are, and will be, at war with him.

Lastly, Zophar concludes like an orator, *ver. 29.* *This is the portion of a wicked man from God*, it is allotted him, it is designed him, as his portion. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity, it is what he must abide by: *this is the heritage of his decree from God*; it is the settled rule of his judgment, and fair warning is given of it. *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die!* Ezek. xxxiii. 8. Though impenitent sinners do not always fall under such temporal judgments as are here described, (therein Zophar was mistaken) yet the wrath of God abides upon them, and they are made miserable by spiritual judgments, which are much worse, their consciences being either on the one hand a terror to them, and then they are in continual amazement, or on the other hand feared and silenced, and then they are given up to a reprobate sense, and bound over to eternal ruin. Never was any doctrine better explained, nor worse applied than this here by Zophar, who intended all this to prove Job an hypocrite. Let us receive the good explication, and make a better application, for warning to ourselves to stand in awe, and not to sin.

## C H A P. XXI.

This is Job's reply to Zophar's discourse; in which he complains less of his own miseries, than he had done in his former discourses, finding that his friends were not moved by his complaints, to pity him in the least, and comes closer to the general question that was in dispute betwixt him and them, whether outward prosperity, and the continuance of it was the mark of the true church, and the true members of it, so that the ruin of a man's prosperity is sufficient to prove him an hypocrite, though no other evidence appear against him: this they asserted, but Job denied. (1.) His preface here is designed for the moving of their affections, that he might gain their attention, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) His discourse is designed for the convincing of their judgment, and the rectifying of their mistakes. He owns that God does sometimes hang up a wicked man as it were in chains, in terrorem, by some visible remarkable judgment in this life, but denies that he always doth so: nay, he maintains that commonly he doth otherwise, suffering even the worst of sinners to live all their days in prosperity, and to go out of the world without any visible mark of wrath upon them. (1.) He describes the great prosperity of wicked people, *ver. 7—13.* (2.) He shews their great impiety, in which they are hardened by their prosperity, *ver. 14—16.* (3.) He foretells their ruin at length, but after a long reprieve, *ver. 17—21.* (4.) He observes a very great variety in the ways of God's providence towards men, even towards bad men, *ver. 22—26.* (5.) He overthrows the ground of their severe censures of him, by shewing that the destruction is reserved for the other world, but that they many times escape to the last in this world, *ver. 27.* ad finem. And in this Job was clearly in the right.

1. BUT Job answered and said, 2 Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations. 3. Suffer me that I may speak, and after that I have spoken



spoken, mock on. 4. As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? 5. Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth. 6. Even when I remember, I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold of my flesh.

Job here recommends himself, both his case and his discourse, both what he suffered and what he said, to the compassionate consideration of his friends.

1. That which he begs of them is very fair, that they would suffer him to speak, *ver. 3.* and not break in upon him, as Zophar had done, in the midst of his discourse. Losers of all men may have leave to speak; and if those that are accused and censured may not speak for themselves, they are wronged without remedy, and have no way to come at their right. That they would hear diligently his speech, *ver. 2.* as those that were willing to understand him, and if they were under a mistake to have it rectified: and that they would mark him, *ver. 5.* for as good not hear, as not heed and observe what we hear.

2. That which he urgeth for this is very reasonable. 1. They came to comfort him, now, saith he, *let this be your consolations*, *ver. 2.* If you have no other comforts to administer to me, yet deny me not this, be so kind, so just, as to give me a patient hearing; and that shall pass for your consolations of me. Nay, they could not know how to comfort him, if they would not give him leave to open his case and tell his own story. Or, it will be a consolation to yourselves in the reflection, to have dealt tenderly with your afflicted friend, and not harshly.

2. He would hear them speak after it came to their turn. After I have spoken, you may go on with what you have to say, and I will not hinder you, no, though you go on to mock me. Those that engage in controversy must count upon having hard words given them, and resolve to bear it patiently, for generally they that mock will mock on, whatever is said to them.

3. He hoped to convince them: if you will but give me a fair hearing mock on if you can, but I believe I shall say that which will change your note, and make you pity me rather than mock me.

4. They were not his judges, *ver. 4.* *Is my complaint to man?* No, if it were, I see it would be to little purpose to complain. But my complaint is to God, and to him do I appeal. Let him be judge between you and me! Before him we stand upon even terms, and therefore I have the privilege of being heard as well as you. If my complaint were to man, my spirit would be troubled, for they would not regard me, nor rightly understand me; but my complaint is to God, who will suffer me to speak, though you will not. It would be sad if God should deal as unkindly with us as our friends sometimes do.

5. There was that in his case which was very surprising and astonishing, and therefore both needed and deserved their most serious consideration. It was not a common case, but very extraordinary.

1. He himself was amazed at it, at the troubles God had laid upon him and the censures of his friends concerning him, *ver. 6.* *When I remember that terrible day, in which I was on a sudden stripped of all my comforts, that day in which I was stricken with sore boils, when I remember all the hard speeches with which you have grieved me, I confess I am afraid, and trembling takes hold on my flesh,* especially when I compare this with the prosperous condition of many wicked people, and the applauses of their neighbours, with which they pass through the world. Note, The providences of God, in the government of the world, are sometimes very astonishing, even to wise and good men, and bring them to their wits end.

2. He would have them wonder at it, *ver. 5.* *Mark me, and be astonished.* Instead of expounding my troubles, you should awfully adore the unsearchable mysteries of providence in afflicting one thus, whom you know no ill by; you should therefore lay your hand upon your mouth, silently wait the issue, and judge nothing before the time. *God's way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters.* When we cannot account for what he doth, in suffering the wicked to prosper, and the godly to be afflicted, nor fathom the depth of those proceedings, it becomes us to sit down and admire them. *Upright men shall be astonished at this*, chap. xvii. 8. Be you so.

7. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? 8. Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. 9. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. 10. Their bull gendereth and faileth not, their cow calveth and casteth not her calf. 11. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. 12. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. 13. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. 14. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. 15. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him? 15. Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

All Job's three friends in their last discourses had been very large in describing the miserable condition of a wicked man in this world: it is true, saith Job, remarkable judgments are sometimes brought upon notorious sinners, but not always; for we have many instances of the great and long prosperity of those that are openly and avowedly wicked: Though they are hardened in their wickedness by their prosperity, yet they are still suffered to prosper.

1. He here describes their prosperity, both to the height, and breadth, and length of it. If this be true, as you say, pray tell me *wherefore do the wicked live?* *ver. 7.* The matter of fact is taken for granted, for we see instances of it every day. (1.) They live, and are not suddenly cut off by the strokes of divine vengeance: They yet speak who have set their mouths against the heavens. They yet act who have stretched out their hands against God. Not only they live, i. e. they are reprieved, but they live in prosperity, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. Nay, (2.) They become old, they have the honour, satisfaction and advantage of living long, time enough to raise their families and estates. We read of a sinner a hundred years old, Isa. lxv. 20. But this is not all. (3.) They are mighty in power, are preferred to places of authority and trust; and not only make a great figure, but bear a great sway. *Vicit imo & in senatum venit.* Now therefore it is so? Note,

It is worth while to inquire into the reasons of the outward prosperity of wicked people. It is not because God has forsaken the earth, because he doth not see, or doth not hate, or cannot punish their wickedness; but it is because the measure of their iniquities is not full: This is the day of God's patience, and some use or other he makes of them and their prosperity to serve his own counsels, while it ripens them for ruin; but the chief reason is, because he will make it to appear there is another world, which is the world of retribution, and not this.

The prosperity of the wicked is here described to be,

1. Complete and consummate. (1.) They are multiplied, and their family is built up, and they have the satisfaction of seeing it, *ver. 8.* *Their seed is established in their sight.* This is put first, as that which gives both a pleasant enjoyment and a pleasing prospect. (2.) They are easy and quiet, *ver. 9.* Whereas Zophar had spoken of their continual frights and terrors, Job saith *their houses are safe*, both from danger and from the fear of it, *ver. 9.* and so far are they from the killing wounds of God's sword or arrows, that they do not feel the smart of so much as *the rod of God upon them.* (3.) They are rich, and thrive in their estates; of this he gives only one instance, *ver. 10.* Their cattle increase, and they meet with no disappointment in them; not so much as a cow casts her calf, and then their much must needs grow more. This is promised, *Exod. xxiii. 26.* *Deut. vii. 14.* (4.) They are merry and live a jovial life, *ver. 11, 12.* *They send forth their little ones* abroad among their neighbours, like a flock in great numbers, to sport themselves. They have their balls and music-meetings, at which their children dance; and dancing is fittest for children, who know not better how to spend their time, and whose innocence guards them against the mischiefs that commonly attend it. And though the parents are not so very youthful and frolicsome as to dance themselves, yet they take the timbrel and harp; they pipe, and their children dance after the pipe, and they know no grief to put their instruments out of tune, or to withhold their hearts from any joy. Some observe that this is an instance of their vanity, as well as of their prosperity: Here is none of that care taken of their children which Abraham took of his, to teach them the way of the Lord, *Gen. xviii. 19.* Their children do not pray or say their catechism, but dance and sing, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. Sensual pleasures are all the delights of carnal people, and as men are themselves, so they breed their children.

2. Continuing and constant, *ver. 13.* *They spend their days*, all their days in wealth, and never know what it is to want; in mirth, and never know what sadness means, and at last, without any previous alarms to frighten them, without any anguish, or agony, in a moment they go down to the grave, and there are no bands in their death: And if there were not another life after this, it were most desirable to die by the quickest shortest strokes of death. Since we must go down to the grave, if it were the furthest of our journey, we would wish to go down in a moment, to swallow the bitter pill and not chew it.

2. He shews how they abuse their prosperity, and are confirmed and hardened by it in their impiety, *ver. 14, 15.* Their gold and silver serves to steel and brassen them, to make them more insolent and more impudent in their wickedness. Now he mentions this either, (1.) To increase the difficulty: It is strange that any wicked people should prosper thus, but especially that those should prosper who are arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as openly to bid defiance to God himself, and tell him to his face they care not for him; nay, and that their prosperity shall be continued, though they bear up themselves upon that, in their opposition to God; with that weapon they fight against him, and yet are not disarmed. Or, (2.) To lessen the difficulty: God suffers them to prosper, but let us not wonder at it, for *the prosperity of fools destroy them*, by hardening them in sin, *Prov. i. 32. Psal. lxxiii. 7-9.*

See how light these prospering sinners make of God and religion, as if because they have so much of this world, they had no need to look after another.

(1.) See how ill affected they are to God and religion; they abandon them, and cast off the thoughts of them. (1.) They dread the presence of God, they say unto him, *depart from us*, let us never be troubled with the apprehension of being under God's eye, nor be restrained by the fear of him. Or, they bid him depart, as one they do not need, nor have any occasion to make use of: The world is the portion they have chosen and take up with, and think themselves happy in, and while they have that, they can live without God. Justly will God say to them, *depart*, *Matt. xxv. 41.* who have bid him depart; and justly doth he now take them at their word. (2.) They dread the knowledge of God, and of his will, and of their duty to him. *We desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* They that are resolved not to walk in God's ways, desire not to know them, because their knowledge will be a continual reproach to their disobedience, *John iii. 19.*

(2.) See how they argue against God and religion, *ver. 15.* *What is the Almighty?* Strange, that ever creatures should speak so insolently; that ever reasonable creatures should speak so absurdly and unreasonably. The two great bonds by which we are drawn and held to religion, are those of duty and interest; now they here endeavour to break both these bonds asunder. (1.) They will not believe it is their duty to be religious. *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* like Pharaoh, *Exod. v. 2.* *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Observe how lightly they speak of God; what is the Almighty? as if he were a mere man, a mere cypher, or one they have nothing to do with, and that has nothing to do with them. How hardly they speak of religion! They call it a service, and mean a hard service. Is it not enough they think to keep up a fair correspondence with the Almighty, but they must serve him, which they look upon as a task and a drudgery? Observe also how lightly they speak of themselves, that we should serve him: We, who are rich and mighty in power, shall we be subject and accountable to him! No, we are Lords, *Jer. ii. 31.* (1.) They will not believe it is their interest to be religious. *What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?* All the world is for what they can get, and therefore wisdom's merchandise is neglected, because they think there is nothing to be got by it: *It is in vain to serve God*, *Mal. iii. 13, 14.* Praying will not pay debts, nor portion children; nay, perhaps serious godliness may baulk a man's preferment, and expose him to losses; and what then? Is nothing to be called gain but the wealth and honour of this world? If we obtain the favour of God, and spiritual and eternal blessings, we have no reason to complain of losing by our religion. But if we have not profit by prayer, it is our own fault, *Isa. lviii. 3, 4.* It is because we ask amiss, *Jam. iv. 2.* Religion itself is not a vain thing; if it be so to us, we may thank ourselves for resting in the outside of it, *Jam. i. 26.*

3. He shews their folly herein, and utterly disclaims all concurrence with them, *ver. 19.* *Lo, their good is not in their hand, i. e.* They did not get it without God, and therefore they are very ungrateful to slight him thus: It was not their might, nor the power of their hand, that got them this wealth, and therefore they ought to remember God who gave it them. Nor can they keep it without God, and therefore they are very unwise to lose their interest in him, and bid him to depart from them. Some give this sense of it: Their good is in their barns and their bags, hoarded up there; it is not



not in their hand, to do good to others with it, and then what good doth it do them? And therefore, saith Job, *the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* Far be it from me, that I should be of their mind, say as they say, do as they do, and take my measures from them. Their prosperity approve their sayings, though their way be their folly, Psal. xlix. 13. but I know better things than to walk in their counsel.

17. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out? and how oft cometh their destruction upon them? God distributeth sorrows in his anger. 18. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. 19. God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it. 20. His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty. 21. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst? 22. Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high. 23. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. 24. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. 25. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. 26. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

Job had largely described the prosperity of wicked people, now in these verses,

1. He opposeth this to what his friends had maintained concerning their certain ruin in this life. Tell me how often do you see the candle of the wicked put out? Do you not as often see it burnt down to the socket, until it goes out of itself? *ver. 17.* How often do you see their destruction come upon them, or God distributing sorrows in his anger among them? Do you not as often see their mirth and prosperity continuing to the last? Perhaps there are as many instances of notorious sinners ending their days in pomp, as ending them in misery: which observation is sufficient to invalidate their arguments against Job, and to shew that no certain judgment can be made of men's character by their outward condition.

2. He reconciles this to the holiness and justice of God; though wicked people prosper thus all their days, yet we are not therefore to think that God will let their wickedness always go unpunished. No,

(1.) Even while they prosper thus they are as *stubble and chaff before the stormy wind*, *ver. 18.* They are light and worthless, and of no account either with God, or with wise and good men. They are fitted to destruction, and continually lie exposed to it, and in the height of their pomp and power there is but a step between them and ruin.

(2.) Though they spend all their days in wealth, God is laying up their iniquity for their children, *ver. 19.* and he will visit it upon their posterity when they are gone. The oppressor lays up his goods for his children, to make them gentlemen, but God lays up his iniquity for them, to make them beggars: he keeps an exact account of their father's sins. *Seals them up among his treasures*, Deut. xxxii. 34. and will justly punish the children, while the riches, to which the curse cleaves, are found as assets in their hands.

(3.) Though they prosper in this world, yet they shall be reckoned with in another world: God rewardeth him according to his deeds at last, *ver. 19.* though the sentence passed against his evil works be not executed speedily. Perhaps he may not now be made to fear the wrath to come, but he may flatter himself with hopes that he shall have peace though he go on: but he shall be made to feel it in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. He shall know it, *ver. 19.* *His eyes shall see his destruction*, which he would not be persuaded to believe. They will not see, but they shall see, Isa. xxvi. 11. The eyes that have been wilfully shut against the grace of God, shall be opened to see his destruction. And he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty, that shall be the portion of his cup. Compare Psal. xi. 6. with Rev. xiv. 10. The misery of damned sinners is here set forth in a few words, but very terrible ones: they lie under the wrath of an Almighty God, who in their destruction both shews his wrath, and makes his power known.

And if this will be his condition in the other world, what good will his prosperity in this world do him? *ver. 21.* *What pleasure has he in his house after him?* Our Saviour has let us know how little pleasure the rich man in hell had in his house after him, when the remembrance of the good things he had received in his life-time would not cool his tongue, but added much to his misery, as did also the sorrow he was in, left his five brethren, whom he left in his house after him, should follow him to that place of torment, Luke xvi. 25—28. So little will the gain of the world profit him that has lost his soul.

3. He resolves this difference which Providence makes between one wicked man and another into the wisdom and sovereignty of God, *ver. 22.* *Shall any pretend to teach God knowledge?* Dare we arraign God's proceedings, or blame his conduct? Shall we take upon us to tell God how he would govern the world, what sinner he shall spare, and what he should punish? He hath both authority and ability to judge those that are high. Angels in heaven, princes and magistrates on earth, are accountable to God, and must receive their doom from him: he manages them, and makes what use he pleases of them: shall he then be accountable to us, or receive advice from us? he is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he shall do right, Gen. xviii. 25. Rom. iii. 6. and those proceedings of his providence which seem to contradict one another, he can make not only mutually to agree, but jointly to serve his own purposes.

The little difference there is between one wicked man's dying impenitent in peace and pomp, and another wicked man's dying so in pain and misery, when both will at last meet in hell, he illustrates by the little difference there is between one man's dying suddenly and another's dying slowly, when they will both meet shortly in the grave. So vast is the disproportion between time and eternity, that if hell be the lot of every sinner at last, it breaks no squares if one goes singing thither, and another sighing. See,

(1.) How various the circumstances of people's dying are. There is one way into the world, we say, but many out; yet as some are born by quick and easy labour, others by that which is hard and lingering, so dying is to some much more terrible than to others: and since the death of the body is the birth of the soul into another world, death-bed agonies may not unfitly be compared to child-bed throws. Observe the difference,

1. One dies suddenly, in his full strength, not weakened by age or sickness, (*ver. 23.*) being wholly at ease and quiet, under no apprehension at all of the approach of death, nor in any fear of it: but on the contrary, because his breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow,

(*ver. 24.*) i. e. he is healthful and vigorous, and of a good constitution like a milch-cow that is fat and in good liking, he counts upon nothing but to live many years in mirth and pleasure. Thus fair doth he bid for life, and yet cut off in a moment by the stroke of death. Note, It is a common thing for persons to be taken away by death, when they are in their full strength, in the highest degree of health, when they least expect death, and think themselves best armed against it, and are ready not only to set death at a distance, but to set it at defiance. Let us therefore never be secure, for we have known many well and dead in the same week, the same day, the same hour, nay perhaps the same minute. Be we therefore always ready.

2. Another dies slowly, and with a great deal of previous pain and misery, *ver. 25.* *In the bitterness of his soul*, such as poor Job was himself now in, and never eats with pleasure, has no appetite to his food, nor any relish of it, through sickness, or age, or sorrow of mind. What great reason have those to be thankful that are in health, and always eat with pleasure? and what little reason have they to complain who sometimes do not, when they hear of many that never do?

(2.) How discernible this difference is in the grave: as rich and poor, so healthful and unhealthful meet there, *ver. 26.* *They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them*, and feed sweetly on them. Thus, if one wicked man die in a palace and another in a dungeon, they will meet in the congregation of the dead and damned, and the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched, will be the same to them, which makes those differences inconsiderable, and not worth perplexing ourselves about.

27. Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me. 28. For ye say, Where is the house of the prince? and where are the dwelling-places of the wicked? 29. Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens? 30. That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. 31. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done? 32. Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb. 33. The clouds of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. 34. How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?

In those verses,

1. Job opposeth the opinion of his friends, which he saw they still adhered to; That wicked people are sure to fall into such visible and remarkable ruin, as Job was now fallen into, and none but they; upon which principle they condemned Job as a wicked man. I know your thoughts (saith Job, *ver. 27.*) I know you will not agree with me; for your judgments are tinged and biased by your piques and prejudices against me, and the devices which you wrongfully imagine against my comfort and honour: and how can such men be convinced?

Job's friends were ready to say, in answer to his discourse concerning the prosperity of the wicked, *where is the house of the prince?* *ver. 28.* Job's house, or the house of his eldest son, in which his children were feasting: inquire what are the circumstances of Job's house and family, and then inquire, *where are the dwelling places of the wicked?* and compare them together, and you will soon see that Job's house is in the same predicament with the houses of tyrants and oppressors, and may therefore conclude that doubtless he was such a one.

2. He lays down his own judgment to the contrary, and for proof of it appeals to the sentiments and observations of all mankind. So confident is he that he is in the right, that he is willing to refer the cause to the next man that comes by, *ver. 29.* *Have ye not asked them that go by the way?* any indifferent person, any that will answer you, and not only to which of the saints, (to whom Eliphaz appealed, chap. v. 1.) but to which of the children of men will you turn? Turn to which you will, and you will find them all of my mind; that the punishment of sinners is designed more for the other world than for this, according to the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, Jude 14. Do you not know the tokens of this truth, which all that have made any observations upon the providences of God concerning mankind in this world can furnish you with?

Now what is it that Job here asserts? Two things,

1. That impenitent sinners will certainly be punished in the other world, and ordinarily their punishment is put off until then.

2. That therefore we are not to think it strange if they prosper greatly in this world, and fall under no visible token of God's wrath. Therefore they are spared now, because they are to be punished then: therefore the *workers of iniquity flourish, that they may be destroyed for ever*, Psal. xcii. 7. This sinner is here supposed,

1. To live in a great deal of power, so as to be not only the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, Ezek. xxxii. 27. but the terror of the wife and good too, whom he keeps in such awe that none dares declare his way to his face, *ver. 31.* None will take the liberty to reprove him, to tell him of the wickedness of his way, and what will be in the end thereof, so that he sins securely, and is not made to know either shame or fear. The prosperity of fools destroys them, by setting them (in their own conceit) above reproofs, by which they might be brought to that repentance which alone will prevent their ruin. Those are marked for destruction that are let alone in sin, Hof. iv. 17. And if none dares declare his way to his face, much less dare any repay him what he has done, and make him refund there where he has done wrong. He is one of those great flies which break through the cobwebs of the law, that hold only the little ones: this emboldens sinners in their sinful ways, that they can brow-beat justice, and make it afraid to meddle with them. But there is a day coming when those shall be told of their faults that now would not bear to hear of them, shall have their sins set in order before them, and their way declared to their face, to their everlasting confusion, that would not have it done here to their conviction; when those who would not repay the wrongs they had done, shall have them repaid to them.

2. To die and be buried in a great deal of pomp and magnificence, *ver. 32, 33.* There is no remedy; he must die; that is the lot of all men, but every thing you can think of shall be done to take off the reproach of death.

(1.) He shall have a splendid funeral: a poor thing for any man to be proud of the prospect of; yet with some it passeth for a mighty thing: well, he shall be brought to the grave in state, surrounded with all the honours of the Herald's office, and all the respects his friends can then pay to his remains: *the rich man died and was buried*, but no mention is made of the



the poor man's burial, *Luke xvi. 22.* (2.) He shall have a stately monument erected over him, he shall remain in the tomb with a *hie jacet* over him, and a large encomium. Perhaps it is meant of the embalming of his body to preserve it, which was a piece of honour anciently done by the Egyptians to their great men. He shall watch in the tomb, so the word is, shall abide solitary and quiet there, as a watchman in his tower. (3.) *The elods of the valley shall be sweet to him*, there shall be as much done as can be with rich odours to take off the noisomeness of the grave, as by lamps to set aside the darkness of it, which perhaps was referred to in the foregoing phrase of watching in the tomb; but it is all a jest; what is the light, or what the perfume to a man that is dead? (4.) It shall be alleged, for the lessening of the disgrace of death, that it is the common lot, he has only truckled to fate, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. Note, Death is the way of all the earth: when we are to cross that darksome valley we must consider, (1.) That they are innumerable before us, it is a trucked road, which may help to take off the terror of it. To die is *ire ad plures*, to go with the crowd. (2.) That every man shall draw after us: as there is a plain track before, so there is a long train behind; we are neither the first nor the last that pass through that dark entry. Every one must go in his own order, the order appointed of God.

Lastly, From all this Job infers the impertinency of their discourses, *ver. 34.* (1.) Their foundation is rotten, and they went upon a wrong hypothesis. In your answers their remaineth falsehood; what you have said, stands not only unproved but disproved, and lies under such an imputation of falsehood as you cannot clear it from. (2.) Their building was weak and tottering, you comfort me in vain. All you have said gives me no relief; you tell me I shall prosper again if I turn to God, but you go upon this presumption that piety shall certainly be crowned with prosperity, which is false; and therefore how can your inference from it yield me any comfort? Note, Where there is not truth there is little comfort to be expected.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Eliphaz here leads on a third attack upon poor Job, in which Bildad followed him, but Zophar drew back and quitted the field. It was one of the unhappinesses of Job, as it is of many an honest man, to be misunderstood by his friends. He had spoken of the prosperity of wicked men in this world as a mystery of providence, but they took it for a reflection upon providence, as countenancing their wickednesses, and fell foul upon him accordingly. In this chapter, (1.) Eliphaz checks him for his complaints of God, and of his dealings with him, as if he thought God had done him wrong, *ver. 2-4.* (2.) He chargeth him with many high crimes and misdemeanors, for which he supposeth God was now punishing him. Oppression and injustice, *ver. 5-11.* Atheism and infidelity, *ver. 12-14.* (3.) He compares his case to that of the whole world, *ver. 15-20.* (4.) He gives him very good counsel, assuring him that if he would take it, God would return in mercy to him, and he should return to his former prosperity, *ver. 21-30.**

**1. THEN** Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? 3. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect. 4. Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgment?

Eliphaz here insinuates that because Job complained so much of his afflictions he thought God was unjust in afflicting him; but it was a strained *inuendo*, Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz saith here, is therefore unjustly applied to Job, but in itself it is very true and good.

1. That when God doth us good, it is not because he is indebted to us; if he were, there might be some colour to say, when he afflicts us, he doth not deal fairly with us; but whoever pretends that he has by any meritorious action made God his debtor, let him prove this debt, and he shall be sure not to lose it, *Rom. vi. 35.* Who has given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again! But Eliphaz here shews that the righteousness and perfection of the best man in the world is no real benefit or advantage to God, and therefore cannot be thought to merit any thing from him.

(1.) Man's piety is no profit to God, no gain, *ver. 1, 2.* If we could by any thing merit from God, it would be by our piety, our being righteous, and making our way perfect. If that will not merit, to be sure nothing else will: if a man cannot make God his debtor by his godliness and honesty, and obedience to his laws, much less can he by his wit and learning, and worldly policy. Now Eliphaz here asks, (1.) Whether any man can possibly be profitable to God? No, by no means: *he that is wise may be profitable to himself.* Note, Our wisdom and piety is that which we ourselves are, and are likely to be, great gainers by: *Wisdom is profitable to direct*, *Ecc. x. 10.* *Godliness is profitable to all things*, *1 Tim. iv. 8.* *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself*, *Prov. xi. 12.* The gains of religion are infinitely greater than the losses of it, and so it will appear when they are balanced. But can a man be thus profitable to God! No, for such is the perfection of God, that he cannot receive any benefit or advantage by men; what can be added to that which is infinite? And such is the weakness and imperfection of man, that he cannot offer any benefit or advantage to God. Can the light of a candle be profitable to the sun, or the drop of the bucket to the ocean? He that is wise is profitable to himself for his own direction and defence, his own credit and comfort; he can with his wisdom entertain himself and enrich himself; but can he be so profitable to God? No, God needs not us or our services. We are undone, for ever undone without him, but he is happy, for ever happy without us. Is it any gain to him, any real addition to his glory or wealth, if we make our way perfect? Suppose it were absolutely perfect, yet what is God the better? Much less when it is so far short of being perfect.

(2.) It is no pleasure to him; God hath indeed expressed himself in his word well pleased with the righteous: his countenance beholds them, and his delight is in them and their prayers; but all that adds nothing to the infinite satisfaction and complacency which the eternal mind hath in itself. God can enjoy himself without us, though we could have but little enjoyment of ourselves without our friends. This magnifies his condescension in that, though our services be no real profit or pleasure to him, yet he invites, encourages, and accepts of them.

5. That when God restrains or rebukes us, it is not because he is in danger by us, or jealous of us, *ver. 4.* Will he reprove thee for fear of thee, and take thee down from thy prosperity, lest thou shouldest grow too great for him; as princes sometimes have thought it a piece of policy to curb the growing greatness of a subject, lest he should become formidable? Satan indeed suggested to our first parents, that God forbade them

the tree of knowledge for fear of them, lest they should be as gods, and so become rivals with him; but it was a base insinuation. God rebukes the good because he loves them, but he never rebukes the great because he fears them. He doth not enter into judgment with men, i. e. pick a quarrel with them, and seek occasion against them for fear they should eclipse his honour, or endanger his interest. Magistrates punish offenders for fear of them; Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he feared them: it was for fear that Herod slew the children of Bethlehem; that the Jews persecuted Christ and his apostles. But God doth not, as they did, pervert justice for fear of any. See *Job xxxv. 5, 6, 7, 8.*

5. Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite? 6. For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. 7. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. 8. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth, and the honourable man dwelt in it. 9. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. 10. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; 11. Or darkness that thou canst not see, and abundance of waters cover thee. 12. Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are! 13. And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? 14. Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

Eliphaz and his companions had condemned Job in general as a wicked man and an hypocrite; but none of them had descended to particulars, nor drawn up any articles of impeachment against him, until Eliphaz did it here, where he positively and expressly chargeth him with many high crimes and misdemeanors, which if he had really been guilty of, they might well have justified themselves in their harsh censures of him. Come (saith Eliphaz) we have been too long beating about the bush, too tender of Job, and afraid of grieving him, which has but confirmed him in his self-justification; it is high time to deal plainly with him, we have condemned him by parables, but that doth not answer the end, he is not prevailed with to condemn himself; we must therefore plainly tell him, *thou art the man*, the tyrant, the oppressor, the atheist, we have been speaking of all this while. Is not thy wickedness great? Certainly it is, or else thy troubles would not be so great: I appeal to thyself, and thy own conscience? are not thine iniquities infinite, both in number and heinousness? Strictly taken, nothing is infinite but God: but he means this; his sins were more than could be counted, and more heinous than could be conceived. Sin being committed against an infinite majesty, has in it a kind of infinite malignity. But when Eliphaz chargeth Job thus high, and ventures to descend to particulars too, laying to his charge that which he knew not, we may take occasion from hence, (1.) To be angry at those who do unjustly censure and condemn their brethren. For ought I know, Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely as he doth here, was guilty of as great a sin, and as great a wrong to Job as the Sabeans and Chaldeans that robbed him. For a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity and friendship, either to raise or receive calumnies, jealousies and evil surmises, concerning others: and it is the more base and disingenuous if we thus vex those that are in distress, and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of the particulars that follow here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly, and throw all the dirt he could on Job, not doubting but some would stick. (2.) To pity those that are thus censured and condemned. Innocency itself will be no security against a false and foul tongue. Job, whom God himself praised as the best man in the world, is here represented by one of his friends, and he a wise and good man too, as one of the greatest villains in nature. Let us not think it strange if at any time we be thus blackened, but learn how to pass by evil report as well as good, and commit our cause, as Job did, to him that judgeth righteously.

Let us see the particular articles of this charge, 1. He charges him with oppression and injustice; that when he was in prosperity he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with it. This was utterly false, as appears by the account Job gives of himself, *chap. xxix. 12, &c.* and the character God gave of him, *chap. i.* And yet,

(1.) Eliphaz branches out this charge into divers particulars, with as much assurance as if he could call witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. He tells him, (1.) That he had been cruel and unmerciful to the poor. As a magistrate he ought to have protected them, and seen them provided for; but Eliphaz suspects that he never did them any kindness, but all the mischief his power enabled him to do. That for an inconsiderable debt he demanded and carried away by violence a pawn of great value, even from his brother, whose honesty and sufficiency he could not but know; *ver. 6.* *Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought*; or as the LXX read it, *Thou hast taken thy brethren for pledges*, and that for nought; imprisoned them, enslaved them, because they had nothing to pay. That he had taken the very clothes of his insolvent tenants and debtors, all they had to their backs; so that he had stripped them naked, and left them so: the law of Moses forbade this, *Exod. xxii. 26.* *Deut. xxiv. 13.* That he had not been charitable to the poor; no not to poor travellers, and poor widows. Thou hast not given so much as a cup of cold water, which would have cost thee nothing, to the weary to drink, when he begged for it, (*ver. 7.*) and was ready to perish for want of it: nay, thou hast withholden bread from the hungry in their extremity; hast not only not given it, but hast forbidden the giving of it; which is *withholding good from those to whom it is really due*, *Prov. iii. 27.* Poor widows, that while their husbands were living, troubled nobody, but now were forced to seek relief, thou hast sent away empty from thy doors with a sad heart, *ver. 9.* Those that came to thee for justice, thou didst send them away unheard, unhelped, nay, though they come to thee full, thou didst squeeze them, and send them away empty: and, worst of all, the arms of the fatherless have been broken: those that could help themselves but little, thou hast quite disabled to help themselves. This, which is the blackest part of the charge, is but insinuated: *the arms of the fatherless have been broken*: he doth not say, thou hast broken them, but he would have it understood so; and if they be broken, and those that have power do not relieve them, they are chargeable with it. They have been broken by those under thee, and thou hast connived at it, which brings thee under the guilt. (2.) That he had been partial to the rich and great, *ver. 8.* *As for the mighty man*, if he were guilty of any crime;



crime, yet he should never be questioned for it; he had the earth, he dwelt in it: if he brought an action never so unjustly, or if an action were never so unjustly brought against him, yet he was sure to carry his cause in the courts. The poor were not sed at thy door, while the rich were feasting at thy table. Contrary to this is Christ's rule for hospitality, *Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14.* and Solomon saith, *he that gives to the rich shall come to poverty.*

(2.) He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins, *ver. 10, 11.* Those that are guilty of such practices as these commonly bring themselves into just such a condition as thou art now in, and therefore we conclude thou hast been thus guilty. (1.) God's providence useth to cross and embarrass such, and snares are accordingly round about thee; so that which way soever thou stepp'st or lookest, thou findest thyself in distress; and others are as hard upon thee as thou hast been upon the poor. (2.) Their own consciences use to terrify and accuse them: no sin makes a louder cry there than unmercifulness: and accordingly sudden fear troubleth thee; and though thou wilt not own it, it is guilt of this kind that creates thee all this terror. Zophar had insinuated this, *chap. xx. 19, 20.* (3.) They are brought to their wit's end, so mused and bewildered, that they know not what to do: and that also is thy case; for thou art in darkness that thou canst not see, wherefore God contends with thee, nor what is the best course for thee to take, *for abundance of waters cover thee, i. e. thou art in a mist, in the midst of dark waters, in the thick clouds of the sky.* Note, Those that have not shewed mercy, may justly be denied the comfortable hopes that they shall find mercy, and then what can they expect but snares and darkness, and continual fear.

2. He chargeth him with atheism, infidelity, and gross impiety, and thought this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness; he that did not fear God, did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job was an Epicurean, who did indeed own the being of a God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he confined himself to the entertainments of the upper world, and never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of this.

1. Eliphaz observes a good truth, which he thought if Job would duly consider, he would not be so passionate in his complaints, nor so bold in justifying himself, *ver. 12.* *Is not God in the height of heaven?* Yes, no doubt he is: no heaven so high but God is there: and in the highest heavens, the heavens of the blessed, the residence of his glory is in a special manner, there he is pleased to manifest himself in a way peculiar to the upper world, and thence he is pleased to manifest himself in a way suited to this lower world. There is his throne; there is his court: he is called the heavens, *Dan. iv. 26.* Thus Eliphaz proves that a man cannot be profitable to God, *ver. 2.* and that he ought not to contend with God: it is his folly if he does; and that we ought always to address ourselves to God with very great reverence; for when we behold the height of the stars how high they are, we might at the same time also consider the transcendent majesty of God, who is above the stars, and how high he is.

2. He chargeth it upon Job that he made an ill use of this doctrine, which he might have made so good a use of, *ver. 13.* This is *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, fighting against religion with its own weapons, and turning its own artillery upon itself: thou art willing to own that *God is in the height of heaven*, but from thence thou inferest, *how doth God know?* Bad men expel the fear of God out of their hearts, by banishing the eye of God out of the world, *Ezek. viii. 12.* and care not what they do, if they can but persuade themselves that God doth not know: Eliphaz suspects that Job had such notions as this of God; that because he is in the height of heaven, (1.) It is therefore impossible for him to see and hear what is done at so great a distance as this earth; especially since there is a dark cloud, *ver. 13.* many thick clouds, *ver. 14.* that come between him and us, and are a covering to him, so that he cannot see, much less can he judge of the affairs of this lower world: as if God had *eyes of flesh*, *Job x. 4.* The interposing firmament is to him as transparent crystal, *Ezek. i. 22.* Distance of place creates no difficulty to him who is immense, no more than distance of time to him who is eternal. Or, (2.) That it is therefore below him, and a diminution to his glory to take cognizance of this inferior part of the creation: he walks in the circuit of heaven, and hath enough to do to enjoy himself and his own perfections and glory in that bright and quiet world, why should he trouble himself about us? This is gross absurdity, as well as gross impiety, which Eliphaz here fathers upon Job; for it supposeth that the administration of Government is a burden and disparagement to the supreme governor; and the acts of justice and mercy were a toil to a mind infinitely wise, holy, and good. If the sun, a creature and inanimate, can with his light and influence reach this earth, and every part of it, *Psal. xix. 3.* even from that vast height of the visible heavens in which he is, and in the circuit in which he walks, and that through many a thick and dark cloud, shall we question it concerning the Creator?

15. Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? 16. Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood. 17. Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them? 18. Yet he filled their houses with good things; but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. 19. The righteous see it, and are glad: and the innocent laugh them to scorn. 20. Whereas our substance is not cut down, but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

Eliphaz having endeavoured to convict Job, by setting his sins (as he thought) in order before him, here endeavours to awaken him to a sight and sense of his misery and danger, by reason of sin; and this he doth, by comparing his case with that of the sinners of the old world; *q. d.* thy condition is bad now, but unless thou repent it will be worse, as theirs was. *Theirs who were overflown with a flood, as the whole world, ver. 16.* and theirs the remnant of whom the fire consumed, *ver. 20.* viz: the Sodomites, who in comparison of the old world were but a remnant. And these two instances of the wrath of God against sin and sinners, are more than once put together for warning to a careless world, as by our Saviour, *Luke xvii. 26, &c.* and the apostle, *2 Pet. ii. 5, 6.* Eliphaz would have Job to mark the old way which wicked men have trodden, *ver. 15.* and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. Note, There is an old way which wicked men have trodden. Religion had but newly entered, when sin immediately followed it: But though it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way, and it leads to destruction: And it is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk in it. Eliphaz here puts Job in mind of it, perhaps in opposition to what he had said of the prosperity of the wicked; *q. d.* thou canst find out here and there a single instance, it may be, of a wicked man ending his days in peace, but what is that to those two great instances of the final perdition of ungodly men; the drowning of the whole

world, and the burning of Sodom? Destructions by wholesale, in which he thinks Job may, as in a glass, see his own face.

Observe, 1. The ruin of those sinners, *ver. 16.* *They were cut down out of time; i. e.* they were cut off in the midst of their days, when, as a man's time then went, many of them might in a course of nature have lived some hundreds of years longer, which made their immature extirpation the more grievous. They were cut down out of time to be hurried into eternity. And their foundation, the earth on which they built themselves, and all their hopes, was overflown with a flood, the flood which was brought in upon the world of the ungodly, *2 Pet. ii. 3.* Note, Those who build upon the sand, choose a foundation which will be overflown; when the rains descend and the floods come, *Matt. vii. 27.* and then their building must needs fall, and they perish in the ruins of it, and repent their folly when it is too late.

2. The sin of those sinners, which brought that ruin, *ver. 17.* *They said unto God, Depart from us.* Job had spoke of some who said so, and yet prospered, *chap. xxi. 14.* But these did not, (saith Eliphaz) they found to their cost what it was to set God at defiance. Those that were resolved to lay the reins in the neck of their appetites and passions, began with this; they said unto God, *Depart*, they abandoned all religion, hated the thoughts of it, and desired to live without God in the world: they shunned his word, and silenced his conscience, his deputy! And what can the Almighty do for them? Some make this to speak the justness of their punishment: they said to God, *Depart from us*, and then what else could the Almighty do with them but cut them off? Those that will not submit to God's golden sceptre, what is to be expected, but that they should be broken to pieces with his iron rod? Others make it to speak the injustice of their sin: But what hath the Almighty done against them? What iniquity have they found in him? or wherein has he wearied them? *Mic. vi. 3. Jer. ii. 5.* Others make it to speak the reason of their sin: They say unto God, *Depart*, asking what the Almighty can do to them? What has he done to oblige us? What can he do in a way of wrath to make us miserable; or in a way of favour to make us happy? As they argue, *Zeph. i. 12.* *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* Eliphaz shews the absurdity of this in one word, and that is calling God the Almighty; for if he is so, what cannot he do? But it is not strange, if those cast off all religion, who neither dread God's wrath, nor desire his favour.

3. The aggravation of this sin: *Yet he had filled their houses with good things, ver. 18.* Both those of the old world, and those of Sodom, had great plenty of all the delights of sense; for they eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, &c. *Luke xvii. 27.* So that they had no reason to ask what the Almighty could do for them; for they lived upon his bounty: No reason to bid him depart from them who had been so kind to them. Many have their houses full of goods, but their hearts empty of grace, and thereby are marked for ruin.

4. The protestation which Eliphaz makes against the principles and practices of those wicked people: *But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* Job had said so, *chap. xxi. 16.* and Eliphaz will not be behind with him. If they cannot agree in their own principles concerning God, yet they agree in renouncing the principles of those that live without God in the world. Note, Those that differ from each other in some matters of religion, and are engaged in disputes about them, yet ought unanimously and vigorously to appear against atheism and irreligion, and to take great care that their disputes do not hinder either their vigour or unanimity, in the common cause of God, that righteous cause.

5. The pleasure and satisfaction which the righteous shall have in this. (1.) In seeing the wicked destroyed, *ver. 19.* They shall see it, *i. e.* observe it and take notice of it, *Hos. xiv. 9.* They shall be glad, not to see their fellow creatures miserable, or any secular turn of their own served, or point gained, but to see God glorified, the word of God fulfilled, the power of oppressors broken, and thereby the oppressed relieved; to see sin ashamed, atheists and infidels confounded, and fair warning given to all others to shun such wicked courses. Nay, they shall laugh them to scorn, *i. e.* they justly might do it, they shall do it as God doth it, in a holy manner, *Psal. ii. 4. Prov. i. 26.* They shall take occasion from thence to expose the folly of sinners, and shew how ridiculous their principles are, though they call themselves wits. *Lo this is the man that made not God his strength:* and see what comes of it, *Psal. liii. 7.* Some understand this of righteous Noah and his family, who beheld the destruction of the old world, and rejoiced in it, as he had grieved for their impiety: And Lot, who saw the ruin of Sodom, had the same reason to rejoice, *1 Pet. ii. 8.* (2.) In seeing themselves distinguished, *ver. 20.* *Whereas our substance is not cut down, as theirs was, and as thine is, we continue to prosper, which is a sign we are the favourites of heaven, and in the right.* The same rule that served him to condemn Job by, served him to magnify himself and his companions by: His substance is cut down, therefore he is a wicked man: Ours is not, therefore we are righteous: But it is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. If others be consumed, if the very remnant of them be consumed, and we be not, instead of censuring them, and lifting up ourselves, as Eliphaz doth here, we ought to be thankful to God; and take it for a warning to ourselves to prepare for the like calamities.

21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. 22. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. 23. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. 24. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. 25. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. 26. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up thy face unto God. 27. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. 28. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways. 29. When men are cast down, then shalt thou say, There is lifting up: and he shall save the humble person. 30. He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.

Methinks I can almost forgive Eliphaz his hard censures of Job, which we had in the beginning of the chapter, though they were very unjust and unkind, for this good counsel and encouragement which he gives him in these verses with which he closeth his discourse, and than which nothing could be better said, or more to the purpose. Though he thought him a bad man, yet he saw reason to have hopes concerning him; and that for all this he would be



both pious and prosperous. But it is strange, that out of the same mouth and almost in the same breath, both sweet waters and bitter should proceed. Good men, though they may perhaps be put into a heat, yet sometimes will talk themselves into better temper, and it may be sooner than another could talk them into it.

Eliphaz had laid before Job the miserable condition of a wicked man, that he might frighten him into repentance: here, on the other hand he shows him the happiness which those may be sure of that do repent, that he might allure and encourage him to it: Ministers must try both ways in dealing with people, must speak to them from mount Sinai by the terrors of the law, and from mount Sion by the comforts of the gospel, must set before them both life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Now here observe,

1. The good counsel which Eliphaz gives to Job; and good counsel it is to us all, though as to Job it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man, and now a stranger and enemy to God.

1. *Acquaint now thyself with God.* Acquiesce in God; so some. And our great duty it is at all times, especially when we are in affliction, to accommodate ourselves to, and quiet ourselves in, all the disposals of divine providence. *Join thyself to him;* so some; fall in with his interest, and not no longer in opposition to him. Ours renders it very well, *Acquaint thyself with him:* Be not such a stranger to him as thou hast made thyself by casting off the fear of him, and restraining prayer before him. It is the duty and interest of every one of us, to acquaint ourselves with God. We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on him, join ourselves to him in covenant of friendship, and then set up and keep up a constant correspondence with him in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour that we are made capable of this acquaintance; our misery that by sin we have lost it; our privilege that through Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

2. *Be at peace.* At peace with thyself, not fretful and uneasy, and in confusion; let not thy heart be troubled, but be quiet and calm, and well composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him: Do not carry on this unholy war. Thou complaineest God is thine enemy; be thou friends with him. It is the great concern of every one of us to make our peace with God, and it is necessary, in order to our comfortable acquaintance with him; for *can two walk together except they be agreed*. Amos iii. 3. This we must do quickly; now, before it be too late: Agree with thine adversary while thou art in the way. This we are earnestly urged to do: *Some read it, Acquaint thyself I pray thee, with him, and be at peace.* God himself beseeches us: ministers in Christ's stead pray us to be reconciled: Can we gain say such intreaties?

3. *Receive the law from his mouth,* ver. 22. Having made thy peace with God, submit to his government, and resolve to be ruled by him, that thou mayest keep thyself in his love. We receive our being and maintenance from God: From him we hope to receive our bliss, and from him we must receive law: *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Which way, then, we receive the intimations of his will, we must have our eye to him; whether he speaks by scripture, ministers, conscience, or providence, we must take the word as from his mouth, and bow our souls to it. Though in Job's time we do not know that there was any written word, yet there was a revelation of God's will to be received. Eliphaz looked upon Job as an ill man; and was pressing him to repent and reform: And herein consists the conversion of a sinner, his receiving the law from God's mouth, and no longer from the world and the flesh. Eliphaz being now in contest with Job, appeals to the word of God for the ending of the controversy: Receive that, and be determined by it. *To the law and to the testimony.*

4. *Lay up his word in thine heart.* It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, *Prov. iii. 18.* We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe: And we must lay it up in our hearts, as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion; and we may neither lose it wholly, nor be at a loss for it in time of need.

5. *Return to the Almighty,* ver. 23. Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty: Do not only turn towards the Almighty in some good inclinations and good beginnings, but return to him; return home to him, quite to him, so as to reach to the Almighty; so Mr. Poole; by an universal reformation, an effectual thorough change of thy heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him.

6. *Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle.* This was the advice Zophar gave him, chap. xi. 14. *Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle.* Put iniquity also out, the further the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. Thou must not only not be wicked thyself, but reprove and restrain sin in those that are under their charge. Note, Family reformation is needful reformation; we and our house must serve the Lord.

2. The good encouragement which Eliphaz gives Job, that he should be very happy if he would but take this good counsel. In general, *thereby good shall come unto thee,* ver. 21. The good that is now departed from thee; all the good thy heart can desire, temporal, spiritual, eternal good shall come to thee. God shall come to thee, into covenant and communion with thee, and he brings all good with him, all good in him. Thou art now ruined and brought down, but if thou return to God, *thou shalt be built up again,* and thy present ruins shall be repaired, Thy family shall be built up in children, thy estate in wealth, and thy soul in holiness and comfort.

The promises which Eliphaz here encourageth Job with, are reducible to three heads.

1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly upon him; for godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. It is promised,

(1.) That he shall be *very rich,* ver. 24. *Thou shalt lay up gold as dust,* in such great abundance, and *shalt have plenty of silver,* ver. 25. whereas now thou art poor and stripped of all. Job had been rich; Eliphaz suspected he had got his riches by fraud and oppression, and therefore they were taken from him: But if he would return to God and duty, (1.) He should have more wealth than ever he had; not only thousands of sheep and oxen, the wealth of farmers, but thousands of gold and silver, the wealth of princes, Job iii. 15. There is abundantly more riches, true riches, to be got by the service of God, than by the service of the world.

(2.) He should have it more sure to him, *thou shalt lay it up,* in good hands, and hold that which is got by thy piety, by a surer tenure than that which thou gottest by thine iniquity. Thou shalt have silver of strength; for so the word is, which being honestly got, will wear well; silver like steel. (3.) He should, by the grace of God, be kept from setting his heart so much upon it, as Eliphaz thought he had done: And then wealth is a blessing indeed, when we are not ensnared with the love of it: Thou shalt *lay up gold;* but how? not as thy treasure and portion, but *as dust,* and *as the stones of the brooks:* So little shalt thou value it or expect from it, thou shalt lay it at thy feet (*Acts iv. 35.*) not in thy bosom.

(2.) That yet he shall be very safe; whereas men's riches usually expose them to danger, and he had owned that in his prosperity he was not in safety,

chap. iii. 26. now he might be secure; for *the Almighty shall be thy defender;* nay, he shall be *thy defence,* ver. 25. *He shall be thy gold;* so it is in the margin, and it is the same word that is used, ver. 24. for gold, but it signifies also a strong hold, because *money is a defence,* Eccles. vii. 12. Worldlings make gold their God, saints make God their gold; and they that are enriched with his favour and grace may truly be said to have abundance of the best gold, and best laid up. We read it, *He shall be thy defence* against the incursions of neighbouring spoilers. Thy wealth shall not then lie exposed as it did to Sabeans and Chaldeans; which some think is the meaning of that, *Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle;* taking it as a promise. The iniquity or wrong designed against thee shall be put off, and shall not reach thee. Note, Those must needs be safe, and they be secure, that have omnipotence itself for their defence, *Psal. xci. 1, 2, 3.*

2. That his soul should prosper, and he should be enriched with spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings.

(1.) That he should live a life of complacency in God, ver. 26. *For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty;* and thus the Almighty comes to be thy gold, by thy delighting in him, as worldly people delight in their money. He shall be thy wealth, thy defence, thy dignity; for he shall be thy delight. The way to have our hearts desire, is to make God our hearts delight, *Psal. xxxvii. 4.* If God gives us himself to be our joy, he will deny us nothing that is good for us. Now God is a terror to thee, he is to by thine own confession, chap. vi. 4.—xvi. 9.—xix. 11. But if thou wilt return to him, then, not till then, *he will be thy delight;* and it shall be as much pleasure to thee to think of him, as it was pain. No delight is comparable to the delight which gracious souls have in the Almighty: And those that acquaint themselves with him and submit themselves entirely to him, shall find his favour to be not only their strength, but their song.

(2.) That he should have a humble, holy confidence towards God; such as they are said to have *whose hearts condemn them not;* 1 John iii. 21. Then *shalt thou lift up thy face to God* with boldness, and not be afraid as thou now art, to draw near to him. Thy countenance is now fallen, and thou lookest dejected, but when thou hast made thy peace with God, thou shalt blush no more, tremble no more, as now thou dost, and hang thy head no more, but shalt cheerfully, and with a gracious assurance, shew thyself to him, pray before him, and expect blessings from him.

(3.) That he should maintain a constant communion with God: The correspondence once settled, shall be kept up to thine unspeakable satisfaction. Letters shall be both steadily and occasionally interchanged between thee and heaven, ver. 27. (1.) Thou shalt by prayer send letters to God: *Thou shalt make thy prayer* (the word is, *Thou shalt multiply thy prayers*) unto him, and he will not think thy letters troublesome, though many and long: The oftener we come to the throne of grace, the more welcome. Under all thy burthens, in all thy wants, cares, and fears, thou shalt send to Heaven for guidance and strength, wisdom, comfort, and good success. (2.) He shall by his providence and grace answer those letters, and give thee what thou askest of him, either in kind, or kindness: *He shall hear thee,* and make it to appear he doth so, by what he doth for thee, and in thee. (3.) Then thou shalt by the praises reply to the gracious answers which he sent thee: *Thou shalt pay thy vows,* and that shall be acceptable to him, and fetch in further mercy. Note, When God performs that which in our distress we prayed for, we must make conscience of performing that which we then promised, else we do not deal honestly. If we promised nothing else, we promised to be thankful, and that is enough, for it includes all, *Psal. cxvi. 14.*

4. That he should have inward satisfaction in the management of all his outward affairs, ver. 28. *Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee, i. e.* Thou shalt frame all thy projects and purposes with so much wisdom and grace, and resignation to the will of God, that the issue of them shall be to thy heart's content, just as thou wouldest have it to be. Thou shalt *commit thy works unto the Lord* by faith and prayer, and then *thy thoughts shall be established;* thou shalt be easy and pleased, whatsoever comes, *Prov. xvi. 3.* This the grace of God shall work in thee; nay, sometimes the providence of God shall give thee the very thing thou didst desire and pray for, and give it to thee in thine own way, and manner, and time: *Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* When at any time an affair succeeds just according to the scheme we laid, and our measures are in nothing broke, nor are we put upon new counsels, we must own the performance of this promise, *Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee.* Whereas now thou complaineest of darkness round about thee, there then *the light shall shine on thy ways, i. e.* God shall guide and direct thee, and then it will follow of course that he should prosper and succeed thee in all thy undertakings. God's wisdom shall be thy conduct, and his favour thy comfort; and thy ways shall be so under both those lights, as that thou shalt have a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable prospect of what is future, *Psal. xc. 17.*

(5.) That even in times of common calamity and danger he should have abundance of joy and hope, ver. 29. *When men are cast down round about thee, cast down in their affairs, cast down in their spirits, sinking, desponding, and ready to despair, Then shalt thou say, there is lifting up:* Thou shalt find that in thyself which will not only bear thee up under thy troubles, and keep thee from fainting, but lift thee above thy troubles, and enable thee to rejoice evermore. When men's hearts fail them for fear, then shall Christ's disciples *lift up their heads for joy,* Luke xxi. 26—28. Thus are they made to *ride upon the high places of the earth,* Isa. lviii. 14. and that which will lift them up, is the belief of this, that God will save the humble person: They that humble themselves shall be exalted, not only in honour but in comfort.

3. That he should be a blessing to his country, and an instrument of good to many, ver. 30. *God shall, in answer to thy prayers, deliver the island of the innocent,* and have a regard therein to the *pureness of thy hands,* which is necessary to the acceptableness of our prayers, 1 Tim. ii. 8. But because we may suppose the innocent not to need deliverance, it was guilty Sodom that wanted the benefit of Abraham's intercession, I incline to the marginal reading, *The innocent shall deliver the island,* by their advice, *Eccles. ix. 14, 15.* and by their prayers and their interest in heaven, *Acts xvii. 24.* Or, *He shall deliver those that are not innocent, and they are delivered by the pureness of thy hands;* so it may be read, and most probably. Note, A good man is a public good; Sinners fare the better for saints, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby (as some think he did) to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure, for then he would have relieved others, much more himself, he was afterwards made to see his error, when it appeared that Job had a better interest in heaven than he had; for he and his three friends, who in this matter were not innocent, were delivered by the *pureness of Job's hands,* Job xlii. 8.

## C H A P. XXIII.

The chapter begins Job's reply to Eliphaz: and in this reply he takes no notice of his friends, either because he saw it was to no purpose; or because he liked the good counsel Eliphaz gave him in the close of his discourse



discourse so well, that he would make no answer to the peevish reflections he began with; but he appeals to God: begs to have his cause heard, and doubts not but to make it good; having the testimony of his own conscience concerning his integrity. Here seems to be a struggle between flesh and spirit, fear and faith, throughout this chapter. (1.) He complains of his calamitous condition, and especially of God's withdrawing from him, so that he could not get his appeal heard, ver. 2—5. nor discern the meaning of God's dealings with him, ver. 6, 9. nor gain any hope of relief, ver. 13, 14. And this made deep impressions of trouble and terror upon him, ver. 15—17. But, (2.) In the midst of these complaints, he comforts himself with the assurances of God's clemency, ver. 6, 7. and his own integrity, which God himself was a witness to, ver. 10—12. Thus was the light of his day like that spoken of, Zech. xiv. 6, 7. neither perfectly clear nor perfectly dark, but at evening time it was light.

**1. THEN** Job answered and said, 2. Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. 3. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! 4. I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. 5. I would know words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. 6. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. 7. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.

Job is satisfied that he has wrong done him by his friends, and therefore, as ill as he is, he will not give up the cause, nor let them have the last word. Here,

1. He justifies his own resentments and remonstrances of his trouble, ver. 2. *Even to-day, I own, my complaint is bitter* for the reflection, the cause of the complaint is so: There is *wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery, my soul has them still in remembrance*, and it is unbittered by them, Lam. iii. 19, 20. *Even to-day is my complaint counted rebellion*: so some read it; his friends construed the innocent expressions of his grief, as reflections upon God and his providence, and called them rebellion: But, faith he, I do not complain more than there is cause, *for my stroke is heavier than my groaning*. Even to-day, after all you have said to convince and comfort me, still the pain of my body, and the wounds of my spirit are such, that I have reason enough for my complaints, if they were more bitter than they are. We wrong God, if our groaning be heavier than our stroke; like froward children, who when they cry for nothing, have justly something given them to cry for; but we do not wrong ourselves, though our stroke be heavier than our groaning, for little said is soon amended.

2. He appeals from the censures of his friends, to the just judgment of God; and this he thought was an evidence for him that he was not an hypocrite, for then he durst not have made such an appeal as this. St. Paul comforts himself in this, that *he that judged him was the Lord*, and therefore he valued not man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. but he is willing to wait till the appointed day of decision comes; whereas Job is impatient, and passionately wishes to have the judgment day anticipated, and to have his cause tried quickly, as it were, by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer. The apostle found it necessary to press it much upon suffering Christians, patiently to expect the Judge's coming, James v. 7, 8, 9.

(1.) He is so sure of the equity of God's tribunal, that he longs to appear before it, ver. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him!* This may properly speak the pious breathings of a soul convinced it has by sin lost God, and is undone for ever, if it recover not its interest in his favour: O that I knew how I might recover his favour! How I might come into covenant and communion with him! Mich. vi. 6, 7. It is the cry of a poor deserted soul, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? O that I knew where I might find him!* O that he who has laid open the way to him would direct me into it, and lead me in it! But Job here seems to speak it too boldly, that his friends wronged him, and he knew not which way to apply himself to God to have justice done him, else he would come even to his seat to demand it: A patient waiting death and judgment is our wisdom and duty, and if we duly consider things, that cannot be without a holy fear and trembling: but a passionate wishing for death and judgment, without any such fear and trembling, is our sin and folly, and ill becomes us. Do we know what death and judgment are, and are we so very ready for them, that we need not time to get readier? *Woe to them that, thus in a heat, desire the day of the Lord*, Amos v. 18.

(2.) He is so sure of the goodness of his own cause, that he longs to be opening it at God's bar, ver. 4. *I would order my cause before him*, and set in a true light I would produce the evidences of my sincerity in a proper method, and would fill my mouth with arguments to prove it. We may apply this to the duty of prayer, in which we have boldness to enter into the holiest, and to come even to the footstool of the throne of grace: And we have not only liberty of access, but liberty of speech. We have leave, (1.) To be particular in our requests, to order our cause before God, to speak the whole matter, to lay before him all our grievances, in what method we think most proper; we durst not be so free with earthly princes, as an humble holy soul may be with God. (2.) To be importunate in our requests: We are allowed not only to pray, but to plead; not only to ask, but argue; nay, to fill our mouths with argument: Not to move God; he is perfectly apprized of the merits of the cause without our shewing; but to move ourselves to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith in prayer.

(3.) He is so sure of a sentence in favour of him, that he even longed to hear it, ver. 5. *I would know the words which he would answer me, i.e.* I would gladly hear what God will say to this matter in dispute between you and me, and will intirely acquiesce in his judgment. This becomes us in all controversies; let the word of God determine them; let us know what he answers, and understand what he saith. Job knew well enough what his friends would answer him; they would condemn him, and run him down; but (saith he) *I would fain know what God would answer me*; for I am sure his judgment is according to truth, which theirs is not: I cannot understand them they talk so little to the purpose; but what he saith I should understand, and therefore be fully satisfied in.

3. He comforts himself with hopes that God would deal favourably with him in this matter, ver. 6, 7. Note, It is of great use to us in every thing wherein we have to do with God to keep up good thoughts of him. He believes,

1. That God would not overpower him; that he would not deal with him either by absolute sovereignty, or in strict justice; not with a high hand, not with a strong hand: *will he plead against me with his great power!*

No, Job's friends pleaded against him with all the power they had, but will God do so? No, his power is all just and holy, whatever men's is: against those that are obstinate in their unbelief and impenitency, God will plead with his great power: their destruction will come from the glory of his power; but with his own people, that love him and trust in him, he will deal in tender compassion.

2. That on the contrary, he would empower him to plead his own cause before God. *He would put strength in me*, to support me and bear me up, in maintaining mine integrity. Note, The same power that is engaged against proud sinners, is engaged for humble saints, who prevail with God by strength derived from him, as Jacob did, *Hos. xii. 3.* See *Psal. lxxviii. 35.*

3. That the issue would certainly be comfortable, ver. 7. There, in the court of heaven, when the final sentence is to be given, *the righteous might dispute with him*, and come off in his righteousness. Now even the upright are often chastened of the Lord, and they cannot dispute against it: integrity itself is no fence either against calamity or calumny: but in that day, *they shall not be condemned with the world*, though God may afflict by prerogative: *Then you shall discern between the righteous and the wicked*, Mal. iii. 18. So vast will be the difference between them in their everlasting state, whereas now we can scarce distinguish them; so little is the difference between them as to their outward condition, for all things come alike to all. Then, when the final doom is given, *I shall be delivered for ever from my judge, i.e.* I shall be saved from the unjust censures of my friends, and from that divine sentence which is now so much a terror to me. Those that are delivered up to God as their owner and ruler, shall be for ever delivered from him as their judge and avenger: and there is no flying from his justice, but flying to his mercy.

8. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: 9. On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. 10. But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. 11. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. 12. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips, I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

Here, 1. Job complains that he cannot understand the meaning of God's providence concerning him, but was quite at a loss about them, ver. 8, 9. *I go forward and he is not there, &c.* Eliphaz had bid him acquaint himself with God; so I would with all my heart, saith Job, if I knew how to get acquainted with him. He had himself a great desire to appear before God, and get a hearing of his case, but the Judge was not to be found; look which way he would, he could see no sign of God's appearing for him to clear up his innocency: Job, no doubt, believed that God is every where present; but three things he seems to complain of here, (1.) That he could not fix his thoughts, nor form any clear judgment of things in his own mind: his mind was so hurried and discomposed with his troubles, that he was like a man in a fright, or at his wit's end, that runs this way and that way, but being in confusion brings nothing to a head. By reason of the disorder and tumult his spirit was in, he could not fasten upon that which he knew to be in God, and which if he could but mix faith with it, and dwell upon it in his thoughts would be a support to him. It is the common complaint of those who are sick or melancholy, that when they would think of that which is good, they can make nothing of it.

(2.) That he could not find out the cause of his troubles, nor the sin which provoked God to contend with him: he took a view of his whole conversation, turned to every side of it, and could not perceive wherein he had sinned more than others; for which he should thus be punished more than others; nor could he discern what other end God should aim at in afflicting him thus. (3.) That he could not foresee what would be in the end hereof, whether God would deliver him at all, nor if he did, when or which way: he saw not his signs, nor was there any to tell him how long: as the church complains, *Psal. lxxiv. 9.* He was quite at a loss, what to think God would do with him; and whatever conjecture he advanced, still something or other appeared against it.

2. He satisfies himself with this, that God himself was a witness to his integrity, and therefore did not doubt but the issue would be good. After Job had almost lost himself in the labyrinth of the divine counsels, how contentedly doth he sit down at length with this thought, though I know not the way that he takes, for *his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters*; his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and it would be presumption in us to pretend to judge of them: Yet he knows the way that I take, ver. 10. That is, (1.) He is acquainted with it. His friends judged of that which they did not know, and therefore charged him with that which he was never guilty of; but God, who knew every step he had taken, would not do so, *Psal. cxxxix. 3.* Note, It is a great comfort to those who mean honestly, that God understands their meaning, though men do not, cannot, or will not. (2.) He approves of it: He knows that however I may sometimes have taken a false step, yet I have still taken a good way; have chosen the way of truth, and therefore he knows it; i.e. He accepts it, and is well pleased with it, as he is said to know the way of the righteous, *Psal. i. 6.* This comforted the prophet, *Jer. xii. 3.* *Thou hast tried my heart towards thee.* From this Job infers, *when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.* They that keep the way of the Lord, may comfort themselves when they are in affliction with these three things, (1.) That they are but tried; it is not intended for their hurt, but for their honour and benefit; *it is the trial of the faith*, 1 Pet. i. 7. (2.) That when they are sufficiently tried, they shall come forth out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it as dross or reprobate silver. The trial will have an end; *God will not contend for ever.* (3.) That they shall come forth as gold, pure in itself, and precious to the refiner: they shall come forth as gold approved and improved; found to be good, and made to be better. Afflictions are to us as we are; those that go gold into the furnace, will come out no worse.

Now that which encouraged Job to hope that his present troubles would thus end well, was the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had lived a good life in the fear of God.

1. That God's way was the way he walked in, ver. 11. *My foot hath held his steps, i.e.* held to them, held close to them: the steps he takes; I have endeavoured to conform myself to his example. Good people are followers of God: or, I have accommodated myself to his providence, and endeavoured to answer all the intentions of that; to follow providence step by step. Or, his steps are the steps he hath appointed me to take; the way of religion and serious godliness, that way I have kept, and have not declined.



the poor man's burial, *Luke xvi. 22.* (2.) He shall have a stately monument erected over him, he shall remain in the tomb with a *hie jacet* over him, and a large encomium. Perhaps it is meant of the embalming of his body to preserve it, which was a piece of honour anciently done by the Egyptians to their great men. He shall watch in the tomb, so the word is, shall abide solitary and quiet there, as a watchman in his tower. (3.) *The elods of the valley shall be sweet to him*, there shall be as much done as can be with rich odours to take off the noisomeness of the grave, as by lamps to set aside the darkness of it, which perhaps was referred to in the foregoing phrase of watching in the tomb; but it is all a jest; what is the light, or what the perfume to a man that is dead? (4.) It shall be alleged, for the lessening of the disgrace of death, that it is the common lot, he has only truckled to fate, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. Note, Death is the way of all the earth: when we are to cross that darksome valley we must consider, (1.) That they are innumerable before us, it is a tracked road, which may help to take off the terror of it. To die is *ire ad plures*, to go with the crowd. (2.) That every man shall draw after us: as there is a plain track before, so there is a long train behind; we are neither the first nor the last that pass through that dark entry. Every one must go in his own order, the order appointed of God.

Lastly, From all this Job infers the impertinency of their discourses, *ver. 34.* (1.) Their foundation is rotten, and they went upon a wrong hypothesis. *In your answers their remaineth falsehood*; what you have said, stands not only unproved but disproved, and lies under such an imputation of falsehood as you cannot clear it from. (2.) Their building was weak and tottering, you comfort me in vain. All you have said gives me no relief; you tell me I shall prosper again if I turn to God, but you go upon this presumption that piety shall certainly be crowned with prosperity, which is false; and therefore how can your inference from it yield me any comfort? Note, Where there is not truth there is little comfort to be expected.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Eliphaz here leads on a third attack upon poor Job, in which Bildad followed him, but Zophar drew back and quitted the field. It was one of the unhappinesses of Job, as it is of many an honest man, to be misunderstood by his friends. He had spoken of the prosperity of wicked men in this world as a mystery of providence, but they took it for a reflection upon providence, as countenancing their wickednesses, and fell foul upon him accordingly. In this chapter, (1.) Eliphaz checks him for his complaints of God, and of his dealings with him, as if he thought God had done him wrong, *ver. 2-4.* (2.) He chargeth him with many high crimes and misdemeanors, for which he supposeth God was now punishing him. Oppression and injustice, *ver. 5-11.* Atheism and infidelity, *ver. 12-14.* (3.) He compares his case to that of the whole world, *ver. 15-20.* (4.) He gives him very good counsel, assuring him that if he would take it, God would return in mercy to him, and he should return to his former prosperity, *ver. 21-30.**

**1. THEN** Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, 2. Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? 3. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect? 4. Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgment?

Eliphaz here insinuates that because Job complained so much of his afflictions he thought God was unjust in afflicting him; but it was a strained *inuenio*, Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz saith here, is therefore unjustly applied to Job, but in itself it is very true and good.

1. That when God doth us good, it is not because he is indebted to us; if he were, there might be some colour to say, when he afflicts us, he doth not deal fairly with us; but whoever pretends that he has by any meritorious action made God his debtor, let him prove this debt, and he shall be sure not to lose it, *Rom. vi. 35. Who has given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again!* But Eliphaz here shews that the righteousness and perfection of the best man in the world is no real benefit or advantage to God, and therefore cannot be thought to merit any thing from him.

(1.) Man's piety is no profit to God, no gain, *ver. 1, 2.* If we could by any thing merit from God, it would be by our piety, our being righteous, and making our way perfect. If that will not merit, to be sure nothing else will: if a man cannot make God his debtor by his godliness and honesty, and obedience to his laws, much less can he by his wit and learning, and worldly policy. Now Eliphaz here asks, (1.) Whether any man can possibly be profitable to God? No, by no means: *he that is wise may be profitable to himself.* Note, Our wisdom and piety is that which we ourselves are, and are likely to be, great gainers by: *Wisdom is profitable to direct*, *Ecc. x. 10. Godliness is profitable to all things*, *1 Tim. iv. 8. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself*, *Prov. xi. 12.* The gains of religion are infinitely greater than the losses of it, and so it will appear when they are balanced. But can a man be thus profitable to God? No, for such is the perfection of God, that he cannot receive any benefit or advantage by men; what can be added to that which is infinite? And such is the weakness and imperfection of man, that he cannot offer any benefit or advantage to God. Can the light of a candle be profitable to the sun, or the drop of the bucket to the ocean? He that is wise is profitable to himself for his own direction and defence, his own credit and comfort; he can with his wisdom entertain himself and enrich himself; but can he be so profitable to God? No, God needs not us or our services. We are undone, for ever undone without him, but he is happy, for ever happy without us. Is it any gain to him, any real addition to his glory or wealth, if we make our way perfect? Suppose it were absolutely perfect, yet what is God the better? Much less when it is so far short of being perfect.

(2.) It is no pleasure to him: God hath indeed expressed himself in his word well pleased with the righteous: his countenance beholds them, and his delight is in them and their prayers; but all that adds nothing to the infinite satisfaction and complacency which the eternal mind hath in itself. God can enjoy himself without us, though we could have but little enjoyment of ourselves without our friends. This magnifies his condescension in that, though our services be no real profit or pleasure to him, yet he invites, encourages, and accepts of them.

5. That when God restrains or rebukes us, it is not because he is in danger by us, or jealous of us, *ver. 4. Will he reprove thee for fear of thee*, and take thee down from thy prosperity, lest thou shouldest grow too great for him; as princes sometimes have thought it a piece of policy to curb the growing greatness of a subject, lest he should become formidable? Satan indeed suggested to our first parents, that God forbade them

the tree of knowledge for fear of them, lest they should be as gods, and so become rivals with him; but it was a base insinuation. God rebukes the good because he loves them, but he never rebukes the great because he fears them. He doth not enter into judgment with men, *i. e.* pick a quarrel with them, and seek occasion against them for fear they should eclipse his honour, or endanger his interest. Magistrates punish offenders for fear of them; Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he feared them: it was for fear that Herod slew the children of Bethlehem; that the Jews persecuted Christ and his apostles. But God doth not, as they did, pervert justice for fear of any. See *Job xxxv. 5, 6, 7, 8.*

5. Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite? 6. For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. 7. Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry. 8. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth, and the honourable man dwelt in it. 9. Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. 10. Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; 11. Or darkness that thou canst not see, and abundance of waters cover thee. 12. Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are! 13. And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? 14. Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

Eliphaz and his companions had condemned Job in general as a wicked man and an hypocrite; but none of them had descended to particulars, nor drawn up any articles of impeachment against him, until Eliphaz did it here, where he positively and expressly chargeth him with many high crimes and misdemeanors, which if he had really been guilty of, they might well have justified themselves in their harsh censures of him. Come (saith Eliphaz) we have been too long beating about the bush, too tender of Job, and afraid of grieving him, which has but confirmed him in his self-justification; it is high time to deal plainly with him, we have condemned him by parables, but that doth not answer the end, he is not prevailed with to condemn himself; we must therefore plainly tell him, *thou art the man*, the tyrant, the oppressor, the atheist, we have been speaking of all this while. Is not thy wickedness great? Certainly it is, or else thy troubles would not be so great: I appeal to thyself, and thy own conscience? are not thine iniquities infinite, both in number and heinousness? Strictly taken, nothing is infinite but God; but he means this; his sins were more than could be counted, and more heinous than could be conceived. Sin being committed against an infinite majesty, has in it a kind of infinite malignity. But when Eliphaz chargeth Job thus high, and ventures to descend to particulars too, laying to his charge that which he knew not, we may take occasion from hence, (1.) To be angry at those who do unjustly censure and condemn their brethren. For ought I know, Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely as he doth here, was guilty of as great a sin, and as great a wrong to Job as the Sabaeans and Chaldeans that robbed him. For a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity and friendship, either to raise or receive calumnies, jealousies and evil surmises, concerning others; and it is the more base and disingenuous if we thus vex those that are in distress, and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of the particulars that follow here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly, and throw all the dirt he could on Job, not doubting but some would stick. (2.) To pity those that are thus censured and condemned. Innocency itself will be no security against a false and foul tongue. Job, whom God himself praised as the best man in the world, is here represented by one of his friends, and he a wise and good man too, as one of the greatest villains in nature. Let us not think it strange if at any time we be thus blackened, but learn how to pass by evil report as well as good, and commit our cause, as Job did, to him that judgeth righteously.

Let us see the particular articles of this charge,

1. He charges him with oppression and injustice; that when he was in prosperity he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with it. This was utterly false, as appears by the account Job gives of himself, *chap. xxix. 12, &c.* and the character God gave of him, *chap. i.* And yet,

(1.) Eliphaz branches out this charge into divers particulars, with as much assurance as if he could call witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. He tells him, (1.) That he had been cruel and unmerciful to the poor. As a magistrate he ought to have protected them, and seen them provided for; but Eliphaz suspects that he never did them any kindness, but all the mischief his power enabled him to do. That for an inconsiderable debt he demanded and carried away by violence a pawn of great value, even from his brother, whose honesty and sufficiency he could not but know; *ver. 6. Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought*; or as the LXX read it, *Thou hast taken thy brethren for pledges*, and that for nought; imprisoned them, enslaved them, because they had nothing to pay. That he had taken the very clothes of his insolvent tenants and debtors, all they had to their backs; so that he had stripped them naked, and left them so: the law of Moses forbade this, *Exod. xxii. 26. Deut. xxiv. 13.* That he had not been charitable to the poor; no not to poor travellers, and poor widows. Thou hast not given so much as a cup of cold water, which would have cost thee nothing, to the weary to drink, when he begged for it, (*ver. 7.*) and was ready to perish for want of it: nay, thou hast withholden bread from the hungry in their extremity; hast not only not given it, but hast forbidden the giving of it; which is *withholding good from those to whom it is really due*, *Prov. iii. 27.* Poor widows, that while their husbands were living, troubled nobody, but now were forced to seek relief, thou hast sent away empty from thy doors with a sad heart, *ver. 9.* Those that came to thee for justice, thou didst send them away unheard, unhelped, nay, though they come to thee full, thou didst squeeze them, and send them away empty: and, worst of all, the arms of the fatherless have been broken: those that could help themselves but little, thou hast quite disabled to help themselves. This, which is the blackest part of the charge, is but insinuated: *the arms of the fatherless have been broken*: he doth not say, thou hast broken them, but he would have it understood so; and if they be broken, and those that have power do not relieve them, they are chargeable with it. They have been broken by those under thee, and thou hast connived at it, which brings thee under the guilt. (2.) That he had been partial to the rich and great, *ver. 8. As for the mighty man*, if he were guilty of any crime,



crime, yet he should never be questioned for it; he had the earth, he dwelt in it: if he brought an action never so unjustly, or if an action were never so unjustly brought against him, yet he was sure to carry his cause in thy courts. The poor were not fed at thy door, while the rich were feasting at thy table. Contrary to this is Christ's rule for hospitality, *Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14.* and Solomon saith, *he that gives to the rich shall come to poverty.*

(2.) He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins, *ver. 10, 11.* Those that are guilty of such practices as these commonly bring themselves into just such a condition as thou art now in, and therefore we conclude thou hast been thus guilty. (1.) God's providence useth to cross and embarrass such, and snares are accordingly round about thee; so that which way soever thou stepp'st or lookest, thou findest thyself in distress; and others are as hard upon thee as thou hast been upon the poor. (2.) Their own consciences use to terrify and accuse them: no sin makes a louder cry there than unmercifulness: and accordingly sudden fear troubleth thee; and though thou wilt not own it, it is guilt of this kind that creates thee all this terror. Zophar had insinuated this, *chap. xx. 19, 20.* (3.) They are brought to their wit's end, so mused and bewildered, that they know not what to do: and that also is thy case; for thou art in darkness that thou canst not see, wherefore God contends with thee, nor what is the best course for thee to take, *for abundance of waters cover thee,* i. e. thou art in a mist, in the midst of dark waters, in the thick clouds of the sky. Note, Those that have not shewed mercy, may justly be denied the comfortable hopes that they shall find mercy, and then what can they expect but snares and darkness, and continual fear.

2. He chargeth him with atheism, infidelity, and gross impiety, and thought this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness; he that did not fear God, did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job was an Epicurean, who did indeed own the being of a God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he confined himself to the entertainments of the upper world, and never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of this.

1. Eliphaz observes a good truth, which he thought if Job would duly consider, he would not be so passionate in his complaints, nor so bold in justifying himself, *ver. 12.* *Is not God in the height of heaven?* Yes, no doubt he is: no heaven so high but God is there: and in the highest heavens, the heavens of the blessed, the residence of his glory is in a special manner, there he is pleased to manifest himself in a way peculiar to the upper world, and thence he is pleased to manifest himself in a way suited to this lower world. There is his throne; there is his court: he is called the heavens, *Dan. iv. 26.* Thus Eliphaz proves that a man cannot be profitable to God, *ver. 2.* and that he ought not to contend with God: it is his folly if he does: and that we ought always to address ourselves to God with very great reverence; for when we behold the height of the stars how high they are, we might at the same time also consider the transcendent majesty of God, who is above the stars, and how high he is.

2. He chargeth it upon Job that he made an ill use of this doctrine, which he might have made so good a use of, *ver. 13.* This is *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, fighting against religion with its own weapons, and turning its own artillery upon itself: thou art willing to own that *God is in the height of heaven*, but from thence thou inferest, *how doth God know?* Bad men expel the fear of God out of their hearts, by banishing the eye of God out of the world, *Ezek. viii. 12.* and care not what they do, if they can but persuade themselves that God doth not know: Eliphaz suspects that Job had such notions as this of God; that because he is in the height of heaven, (1.) It is therefore impossible for him to see and hear what is done at so great a distance as this earth; especially since there is a dark cloud, *ver. 13.* many thick clouds, *ver. 14.* that come between him and us, and are a covering to him, so that he cannot see, much less can he judge of the affairs of this lower world: as if God had *eyes of flesh*, *Job x. 4.* The interposing firmament is to him as transparent crystal, *Ezek. i. 22.* Distance of place creates no difficulty to him who is immense, no more than distance of time to him who is eternal. Or, (2.) That it is therefore below him, and a diminution to his glory to take cognizance of this inferior part of the creation: he walks in the circuit of heaven, and hath enough to do to enjoy himself and his own perfections and glory in that bright and quiet world, why should he trouble himself about us? This is gross absurdity, as well as gross impiety, which Eliphaz here fathers upon Job; for it supposeth that the administration of Government is a burden and disparagement to the supreme governor; and the acts of justice and mercy were a toil to a mind infinitely wise, holy, and good. If the sun, a creature and inanimate, can with his light and influence reach this earth, and every part of it, *Psal. xix. 3.* even from that vast height of the visible heavens in which he is, and in the circuit in which he walks, and that through many a thick and dark cloud, shall we question it concerning the Creator?

15. Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? 16. Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood. 17. Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them? 18. Yet he filled their houses with good things; but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. 19. The righteous see it, and are glad: and the innocent laugh them to scorn. 20. Whereas our substance is not cut down, but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

Eliphaz having endeavoured to convict Job, by setting his sins (as he thought) in order before him, here endeavours to awaken him to a sight and sense of his misery and danger, by reason of sin; and this he doth, by comparing his case with that of the sinners of the old world; *q. d.* thy condition is bad now, but unless thou repent it will be worse, as theirs was. *Their who were overflown with a flood,* as the whole world, *ver. 16.* and theirs the remnant of whom the fire consumed, *ver. 20.* viz: the Sodomites, who in comparison of the old world were but a remnant. And these two instances of the wrath of God against sin and sinners, are more than once put together for warning to a careless world, as by our Saviour, *Luke xvii. 26, &c.* and the apostle, *2 Pet. ii. 5, 6.* Eliphaz would have Job to mark the old way which wicked men have trodden, *ver. 15.* and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. Note, There is an old way which wicked men have trodden. Religion had but newly entered, when sin immediately followed it: But though it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way, and it leads to destruction: And it is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk in it. Eliphaz here puts Job in mind of it, perhaps in opposition to what he had said of the prosperity of the wicked; *q. d.* thou canst find out here and there a single instance, it may be, of a wicked man ending his days in peace, but what is that to those two great instances of the final perdition of ungodly men; the drowning of the whole

world, and the burning of Sodom? Destructions by wholesale, in which he thinks Job may, as in a glass, see his own face.

Observe, 1. The ruin of those sinners, *ver. 16.* *They were cut down out of time;* i. e. they were cut off in the midst of their days, when, as a man's time then went, many of them might in a course of nature have lived some hundreds of years longer, which made their immature extirpation the more grievous. They were cut down out of time to be hurried into eternity. And their foundation, the earth on which they built themselves, and all their hopes, was overflown with a flood, the flood which was brought in upon the world of the ungodly, *2 Pet. ii. 3.* Note, Those who build upon the sand, choose a foundation which will be overflown; when the rains descend and the floods come, *Matt. vii. 27.* and then their building must needs fall, and they perish in the ruins of it, and repent their folly when it is too late.

2. The sin of those sinners, which brought that ruin, *ver. 17.* *They said unto God depart from us.* Job had spoke of some who said so, and yet prospered, *chap. xxi. 14.* But these did not, (saith Eliphaz) they found to their cost what it was to set God at defiance. Those that were resolved to lay the reins in the neck of their appetites and passions, began with this; they said unto God, *Depart,* they abandoned all religion, hated the thoughts of it, and desired to live without God in the world: they shunned his word, and silenced his conscience, his deputy! And what can the Almighty do for them? Some make this to speak the justness of their punishment: they said to God, *Depart from us,* and then what else could the Almighty do with them but cut them off? Those that will not submit to God's golden sceptre, what is to be expected, but that they should be broken to pieces with his iron rod? Others make it to speak the injustice of their sin: But what hath the Almighty done against them? What iniquity have they found in him? or wherein has he wearied them? *Mic. vi. 3.* *Jer. ii. 5.* Others make it to speak the reason of their sin: They say unto God, *Depart,* asking what the Almighty can do to them? What has he done to oblige us? What can he do in a way of wrath to make us miserable; or in a way of favour to make us happy? As they argue, *Zeph. i. 12.* *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.* Eliphaz shews the absurdity of this in one word, and that is calling God the Almighty; for if he is so, what cannot he do? But it is not strange, if those cast off all religion, who neither dread God's wrath, nor desire his favour.

3. The aggravation of this sin: *Yet he had filled their houses with good things,* *ver. 18.* Both those of the old world, and those of Sodom, had great plenty of all the delights of sense; for they eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, &c. *Luke xvii. 27.* So that they had no reason to ask what the Almighty could do for them; for they lived upon his bounty: No reason to bid him depart from them who had been so kind to them. Many have their houses full of goods, but their hearts empty of grace, and thereby are marked for ruin.

4. The protestation which Eliphaz makes against the principles and practices of those wicked people: *But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.* Job had said so, *chap. xxi. 16.* and Eliphaz will not be behind with him. If they cannot agree in their own principles concerning God, yet they agree in renouncing the principles of those that live without God in the world. Note, Those that differ from each other in some matters of religion, and are engaged in disputes about them, yet ought unanimously and vigorously to appear against atheism and irreligion, and to take great care that their disputes do not hinder either their vigour or unanimity, in the common cause of God, that righteous cause.

5. The pleasure and satisfaction which the righteous shall have in this. (1.) In seeing the wicked destroyed, *ver. 19.* They shall see it, i. e. observe it and take notice of it, *Hos. xiv. 9.* They shall be glad, not to see their fellow creatures miserable, or any secular turn of their own served, or point gained, but to see God glorified, the word of God fulfilled, the power of oppressors broken, and thereby the oppressed relieved; to see sin ashamed, atheists and infidels confounded, and fair warning given to all others to shun such wicked courses. Nay, they shall laugh them to scorn, i. e. they justly might do it, they shall do it as God doth it, in a holy manner, *Psal. ii. 4.* *Prov. i. 26.* They shall take occasion from thence to expose the folly of sinners, and shew how ridiculous their principles are, though they call themselves wits. *Lo this is the man that made not God his strength:* and see what comes of it, *Psal. liii. 7.* Some understand this of righteous Noah and his family, who beheld the destruction of the old world, and rejoiced in it, as he had grieved for their impiety: And Lot, who saw the ruin of Sodom, had the same reason to rejoice, *1 Pet. ii. 8.* (2.) In seeing themselves distinguished, *ver. 20.* *Whereas our substance is not cut down,* as theirs was, and as thine is, we continue to prosper, which is a sign we are the favourites of heaven, and in the right. The same rule that served him to condemn Job by, served him to magnify himself and his companions by: His substance is cut down, therefore he is a wicked man: Ours is not, therefore we are righteous: But it is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. If others be consumed, if the very remnant of them be consumed, and we be not, instead of censuring them, and lifting up ourselves, as Eliphaz doth here, we ought to be thankful to God, and take it for a warning to ourselves to prepare for the like calamities.

21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. 22. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. 23. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. 24. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. 25. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. 26. For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. 27. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. 28. Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways. 29. When men are cast down, then shalt thou say, There is lifting up: and he shall save the humble person. 30. He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.

Methinks I can almost forgive Eliphaz his hard censures of Job, which we had in the beginning of the chapter, though they were very unjust and unkind, for this good counsel and encouragement which he gives him in these verses with which he closeth his discourse, and than which nothing could be better said, or more to the purpose. Though he thought him a bad man, yet he saw reason to have hopes concerning him; and that for all this he would be both



both pious and prosperous. But it is strange, that out of the same mouth and almost in the same breath, both sweet waters and bitter should proceed. Good men, though they may perhaps be put into a heat, yet sometimes will talk themselves into better temper, and it may be sooner than another could talk them into it.

Eliphaz had said before Job the miserable condition of a wicked man, that he might frighten him into repentance: here, on the other hand he shows him the happiness which those may be sure of that do repent, that he might allure and encourage him to it: Ministers must try both ways in dealing with people, must speak to them from mount Sinai by the terrors of the law, and from mount Sion by the comforts of the gospel, must set before them both life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Now here observe,

1. The good counsel which Eliphaz gives to Job; and good counsel it is to us all, though as to Job it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man, and now a stranger and enemy to God.

1. *Acquaint now thyself with God.* Acquiesce in God; so some. And our great duty it is at all times, especially when we are in affliction, to accommodate ourselves to, and quiet ourselves in, all the disposals of divine providence. *Join thyself to him;* so some; fall in with his interest, and act no longer in opposition to him. Ours renders it very well, *Acquaint thyself with him:* Be not such a stranger to him as thou hast made thyself by casting off the fear of him, and restraining prayer before him. It is the duty and interest of every one of us, to acquaint ourselves with God. We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on him, join ourselves to him in covenant of friendship, and then set up and keep up a constant correspondence with him in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour that we are made capable of this acquaintance; our misery that by sin we have lost it; our privilege that through Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

2. *Be at peace.* At peace with thyself, not fretful and uneasy, and in confusion; let not thy heart be troubled, but be quiet and calm, and well composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him: Do not carry on this unholy war. Thou complaineest God is thine enemy; be thou friends with him. It is the great concern of every one of us to make our peace with God, and it is necessary, in order to our comfortable acquaintance with him; for *can two walk together except they be agreed:* Amos iii. 3. This we must do quickly; now, before it be too late: Agree with thine adversary while thou art in the way. This we are earnestly urged to do: Some read it, Acquaint thyself I pray thee, with him, and be at peace. God himself beseeches us; ministers in Christ's stead pray us to be reconciled: Can we gainsay such intreaties?

3. *Receive the law from his mouth,* ver. 22. Having made thy peace with God, submit to his government, and resolve to be ruled by him, that thou mayest keep thyself in his love. We receive our being and maintenance from God: From him we hope to receive our bliss, and from him we must receive law: *Lord what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Which way have we receive the intimations of his will, we must have our eye to him; whether he speaks by scripture, ministers, conscience, or providence, we must take the word as from his mouth, and bow our souls to it. Though in Job's time we do not know that there was any written word, yet there was a revelation of God's will to be received. Eliphaz looked upon Job as an ill man; and was pressing him to repent and reform: And herein consists the conversion of a sinner, his receiving the law from God's mouth, and no longer from the world and the flesh. Eliphaz being now in contest with Job, appeals to the word of God for the ending of the controversy: Receive that, and be determined by it. *To the law and to the testimony.*

4. *Lay up his word in thine heart.* It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, *Prov. iii. 18.* We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe: And we must lay it up in our hearts, as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion; and we may neither lose it wholly, nor be at a loss for it in time of need.

5. *Return to the Almighty,* ver. 23. Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty: Do not only turn towards the Almighty in some good inclinations and good beginnings, but return to him; return home to him, quite to him, so as to reach to the Almighty; so Mr. Poole; by an universal reformation, an effectual thorough change of thy heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him.

6. *Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle.* This was the advice Zophar gave him, *chap. xi. 14. Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle.* Put iniquity afar off, the further the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. Thou must not only not be wicked thyself, but reprove and restrain sin in those that are under their charge. Note, Family reformation is needful reformation; we and our house must serve the Lord.

2. The good encouragement which Eliphaz gives Job, that he should be very happy if he would but take this good counsel. In general, *thereby good shall come unto thee,* ver. 21. The good that is now departed from thee; all the good thy heart can desire, temporal, spiritual, eternal good shall come to thee. God shall come to thee, into covenant and communion with thee, and he brings all good with him, all good in him. Thou art now ruined and brought down, but if thou return to God, *thou shalt be built up* again, and thy present ruins shall be repaired, Thy family shall be built up in children, thy estate in wealth, and thy soul in holiness and comfort.

The promises which Eliphaz here encourageth Job with, are reducible to three heads.

1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly upon him; for godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. It is promised,

(1.) That he shall be *very rich,* ver. 24. *Thou shalt lay up gold as dust,* in such abundance, and *shalt have plenty of silver,* ver. 25. whereas now thou art poor and stripped of all. Job had been rich; Eliphaz suspected he had got his riches by fraud and oppression, and therefore they were taken from him: But if he would return to God and duty, (1.) He should have more wealth than ever he had; not only thousands of sheep and oxen, the wealth of farmers, but thousands of gold and silver, the wealth of princes, *Job iii. 15.* There is abundantly more riches, true riches, to be got by the service of God, than by the service of the world. (2.) He should have it more sure to him, *thou shalt lay it up,* in good hands, and hold that which is got by thy piety, by a surer tenure than that which thou gottest by thine iniquity. Thou shalt have silver of strength; for so the word is, which being honestly got, will wear well; silver like steel. (3.) He should, by the grace of God, be kept from setting his heart so much upon it, as Eliphaz thought he had done: And then wealth is a blessing indeed, when we are not ensnared with the love of it: Thou shalt lay up gold; but how? not as thy treasure and portion, but as dust, and as the stones of the brooks: So little shalt thou value it or expect from it, thou shalt lay it at thy feet (*Acts iv. 35.*) not in thy bosom.

(2.) That yet he shall be very safe; whereas men's riches usually expose them to danger, and he had owned that in his prosperity he was not in safety,

chap. iii. 26. now he might be secure; for *the Almighty shall be thy defender;* nay, he shall be *thy defence,* ver. 25. *He shall be the gold;* so it is in the margin, and it is the same word that is used, ver. 24. for gold, but it signifies also a strong hold, because *money is a defence,* Eccles. vii. 12. Worldlings make gold their God, saints make God their gold; and they that are enriched with his favour and grace may truly be said to have abundance of the best gold, and best laid up. We read it, *He shall be thy defence* against the incursions of neighbouring spoilers. Thy wealth shall not then lie exposed as it did to Sabeans and Chaldeans; which some think is the meaning of that, *Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle;* taking it as a promise. The iniquity or wrong designed against thee shall be put off, and shall not reach thee. Note, Those must needs be safe, and they be secure, that have omnipotence itself for their defence, *Psal. xci. 1, 2, 3.*

2. That his soul should prosper, and he should be enriched with spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings.

(1.) That he should live a life of complacency in God, ver. 26. *For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty;* and thus the Almighty comes to be thy gold, by thy delighting in him, as worldly people delight in their money. He shall be thy wealth, thy defence, thy dignity; for he shall be thy delight. The way to have our hearts desire, is to make God our hearts delight, *Psal. xxxvii. 4.* If God gives us himself to be our joy, he will deny us nothing that is good for us. Now God is a terror to thee, he is so by thine own confession, *chap. vi. 4.—xvi. 9.—xix. 11.* But if thou wilt return to him, then, not till then, *he will be thy delight;* and it shall be as much pleasure to thee to think of him, as it was pain. No delight is comparable to the delight which gracious souls have in the Almighty: And those that acquaint themselves with him and submit themselves entirely to him, shall find his favour to be not only their strength, but their song.

(2.) That he should have a humble, holy confidence towards God; such as they are said to have *whose hearts condemn them not;* 1 John iii. 21. Then shalt thou lift up thy face to God with boldness, and not be afraid as thou now art, to draw near to him. Thy countenance is now fallen, and thou lookest dejected, but when thou hast made thy peace with God, thou shalt blush no more, tremble no more, as now thou dost, and hang thy head no more, but shalt cheerfully, and with a gracious assurance, shew thyself to him, pray before him, and expect blessings from him.

(3.) That he should maintain a constant communion with God: The correspondence once settled, shall be kept up to thine unspeakable satisfaction. Letters shall be both steadily and occasionally interchanged between thee and heaven, ver. 27. (1.) Thou shalt by prayer send letters to God: *Thou shalt make thy prayer* (the word is, *Thou shalt multiply thy prayers*) unto him, and he will not think thy letters troublesome, though many and long: The oftener we come to the throne of grace, the more welcome. Under all thy burthens, in all thy wants, cares, and fears, thou shalt send to Heaven for guidance and strength, wisdom, comfort, and good success. (2.) He shall by his providence and grace answer those letters, and give thee what thou askest of him, either in kind, or kindness: *He shall hear thee,* and make it to appear he doth so, by what he doth for thee, and in thee. (3.) Then thou shalt by the praises reply to the gracious answers which he sent thee: *Thou shalt pay thy vows,* and that shall be acceptable to him, and fetch in further mercy. Note, When God performs that which in our distress we prayed for, we must make conscience of performing that which we then promised, else we do not deal honestly. If we promised nothing else, we promised to be thankful, and that is enough, for it includes all, *Psal. cxvi. 14.*

4. That he should have inward satisfaction in the management of all his outward affairs, ver. 28. *Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee, i. e.* Thou shalt frame all thy projects and purposes with so much wisdom and grace, and resignation to the will of God, that the issue of them shall be to thy heart's content, just as thou wouldest have it to be. Thou shalt commit thy works unto the Lord by faith and prayer, and then *thy thoughts shall be established;* thou shalt be easy and pleased, whatever comes, *Prov. xvi. 3.* This the grace of God shall work in thee; nay, sometimes the providence of God shall give thee the very thing thou didst desire and pray for, and give it to thee in thine own way, and manner, and time: *Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* When at any time an affair succeeds just according to the scheme we laid, and our measures are in nothing broke, nor are we put upon new counsels, we must own the performance of this promise, *Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee.* Whereas now thou complaineest of darkness round about thee, there then *the light shall shine on thy ways, i. e.* God shall guide and direct thee, and then it will follow of course that he should prosper and succeed thee in all thy undertakings. God's wisdom shall be thy conduct, and his favour thy comfort; and thy ways shall be so under both those lights, as that thou shalt have a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable prospect of what is future, *Psal. xc. 17.*

(5.) That even in times of common calamity and danger he should have abundance of joy and hope, ver. 29. *When men are cast down* round about thee, cast down in their affairs, cast down in their spirits, sinking, desponding, and ready to despair, *Then shalt thou say, there is lifting up:* Thou shalt find that in thyself which will not only bear thee up under thy troubles, and keep thee from fainting, but lift thee above thy troubles, and enable thee to rejoice evermore. When men's hearts fail them for fear, then shall Christ's disciples lift up their heads for joy, Luke xxi. 26—28. Thus are they made to ride upon the high places of the earth, Isa. lviii. 14. and that which will lift them up, is the belief of this, that God will save the humble person: They that humble themselves shall be exalted, not only in honour but in comfort.

3. That he should be a blessing to his country, and an instrument of good to many, ver. 30. *God shall, in answer to thy prayers, deliver the island of the innocent, and have a regard therein to the pureness of thy hands,* which is necessary to the acceptableness of our prayers, 1 Tim. ii. 8. But because we may suppose the innocent not to need deliverance, it was guilty Sodom that wanted the benefit of Abraham's intercession, I incline to the marginal reading, *The innocent shall deliver the island,* by their advice, *Eccles. ix. 14, 15.* and by their prayers and their interest in heaven, *Acts xvii. 24.* Or, *He shall deliver those that are not innocent, and they are delivered by the pureness of thy hands;* so it may be read, and most probably. Note, A good man is a public good. Sinners fare the better for saints, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby (as some think he did) to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure, for then he would have relieved others, much more himself, he was afterwards made to see his error, when it appeared that Job had a better interest in heaven than he had; for he and his three friends, who in this matter were not innocent, were delivered by the pureness of Job's hands, Job xlii. 8.

## C H A P. XXIII.

The chapter begins Job's reply to Eliphaz: and in this reply he takes no notice of his friends, either because he saw it was to no purpose; or because he liked the good counsel Eliphaz gave him in the close of his discourse



discourse so well, that he would make no answer to the peevish reflections he began with; but he appeals to God: begs to have his cause heard, and doubts not but to make it good; having the testimony of his own conscience concerning his integrity. Here seems to be a struggle between flesh and spirit, fear and faith, throughout this chapter. (1.) He complains of his calamitous condition, and especially of God's withdrawings from him, so that he could not get his appeal heard, ver. 2—5. nor discern the meaning of God's dealings with him, ver. 6, 9. nor gain any hope of relief, ver. 13, 14. And this made deep impressions of trouble and terror upon him, ver. 15—17. But, (2.) In the midst of these complaints, he comforts himself with the assurances of God's clemency, ver. 6, 7. and his own integrity, which God himself was a witness to, ver. 10—12. Thus was the light of his day like that spoken of, Zech. xiv. 6, 7. neither perfectly clear nor perfectly dark, but at evening time it was light.

**1.** THEN Job answered and said, **2.** Even to day is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. **3.** O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! **4.** I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. **5.** I would know words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. **6.** Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. **7.** There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.

Job is satisfied that he has wrong done him by his friends, and therefore, as ill as he is, he will not give up the cause, nor let them have the last word. Here,

**1.** He justifies his own resentments and remonstrances of his trouble, ver. 2. *Even to-day, I own, my complaint is bitter for the reflection, the cause of the complaint is so: There is wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery, my soul has them still in remembrance, and it is unbittered by them, Lam. iii. 19, 20. Even to-day is my complaint counted rebellion; so some read it; his friends construed the innocent expressions of his grief, as reflections upon God and his providence, and called them rebellion: But, faith he, I do not complain more than there is cause, for my stroke is heavier than my groaning.* Even to-day, after all you have said to convince and comfort me, still the pain of my body, and the wounds of my spirit are such, that I have reason enough for my complaints, if they were more bitter than they are. We wrong God, if our groaning be heavier than our stroke; like froward children, who when they cry for nothing, have justly something given them to cry for; but we do not wrong ourselves, though our stroke be heavier than our groaning, for little said is soon amended.

**2.** He appeals from the censures of his friends, to the just judgment of God; and this he thought was an evidence for him that he was not an hypocrite, for then he durst not have made such an appeal as this. St. Paul comforts himself in this, that *he that judged him was the Lord*, and therefore he valued not man's judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. but he is willing to wait till the appointed day of decision comes; whereas Job is impatient, and passionately wishes to have the judgment day anticipated, and to have his cause tried quickly, as it were, by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer. The apostle found it necessary to press it much upon suffering Christians, patiently to expect the Judge's coming, James v. 7, 8, 9.

(1.) He is so sure of the equity of God's tribunal, that he longs to appear before it, ver. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him!* This may properly speak the pious breathings of a soul convinced it has by sin lost God, and is undone for ever, if it recover not its interest in his favour: O that I knew how I might recover his favour! How I might come into covenant and communion with him! *Mich. vi. 6, 7.* It is the cry of a poor deserted soul, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? O that I knew where I might find him!* O that he who has laid open the way to him would direct me into it, and lead me in it! But Job here seems to speak it too boldly, that his friends wronged him, and he knew not which way to apply himself to God to have justice done him, else he would come even to his seat to demand it: A patient waiting death and judgment is our wisdom and duty, and if we duly consider things, that cannot be without a holy fear and trembling: but a passionate wishing for death and judgment, without any such fear and trembling, is our sin and folly, and ill becomes us. Do we know what death and judgment are, and are we so very ready for them, that we need not time to get ready? *Woe to them that, thus in a heat, desire the day of the Lord, Amos v. 18.*

(2.) He is so sure of the goodness of his own cause, that he longs to be opening it at God's bar, ver. 4. *I would order my cause before him*, and set in a true light I would produce the evidences of my sincerity in a proper method, and would fill my mouth with arguments to prove it. We may apply this to the duty of prayer, in which we have boldness to enter into the holiest, and to come even to the footstool of the throne of grace: And we have not only liberty of access, but liberty of speech. We have leave, (1.) To be particular in our requests, to order our cause before God, to speak the whole matter, to lay before him all our grievances, in what method we think most proper; we durst not be so free with earthly princes, as an humble holy soul may be with God. (2.) To be importunate in our requests: We are allowed not only to pray, but to plead; not only to ask, but argue; nay, to fill our mouths with argument: Not to move God; he is perfectly apprized of the merits of the cause without our shewing; but to move ourselves to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith in prayer.

(3.) He is so sure of a sentence in favour of him, that he even longed to hear it, ver. 5. *I would know the words which he would answer me, i. e.* I would gladly hear what God will say to this matter in dispute between you and me, and will intirely acquiesce in his judgment. This becomes us in all controversies; let the word of God determine them; let us know what he answers, and understand what he saith. Job knew well enough what his friends would answer him; they would condemn him, and run him down; but (saith he) *I would fain know what God would answer me*; for I am sure his judgment is according to truth, which theirs is not: I cannot understand them they talk so little to the purpose; but what he saith I should understand, and therefore be fully satisfied in.

**3.** He comforts himself with hopes that God would deal favourably with him in this matter, ver. 6, 7. Note, It is of great use to us in every thing wherein we have to do with God to keep up good thoughts of him. He believes,

**1.** That God would not overpower him; that he would not deal with him either by absolute sovereignty, or in strict justice; not with a high hand, not with a strong hand: *will he plead against me with his great power!*

No, Job's friends pleaded against him with all the power they had, but will God do so? No, his power is all just and holy, whatever men's is: against those that are obstinate in their unbelief and impenitency. God will plead with his great power; their destruction will come from the glory of his power; but with his own people, that love him and trust in him, he will deal in tender compassion.

**2.** That on the contrary, he would empower him to plead his own cause before God. *He would put strength in me*, to support me and bear me up, in maintaining mine integrity. Note, The same power that is engaged against proud sinners, is engaged for humble saints, who prevail with God by strength derived from him, as Jacob did, *Hos. xii. 3.* See *Psal. lxxviii. 35.*

**3.** That the issue would certainly be comfortable, ver. 7. There, in the court of heaven, when the final sentence is to be given, *the righteous might dispute with him*, and come off in his righteousness. Now even the upright are often chastened of the Lord, and they cannot dispute against it: integrity itself is no fence either against calamity or calumny; but in that day, *they shall not be condemned with the world*, though God may afflict by prerogative: *Then you shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, Mal. iii. 18.* So vast will be the difference between them in their everlasting state, whereas now we can scarce distinguish them; so little is the difference between them as to their outward condition, for all things come alike to all.

Then, when the final doom is given, *I shall be delivered for ever from my judge, i. e.* I shall be saved from the unjust censures of my friends, and from that divine sentence which is now so much a terror to me. Those that are delivered up to God as their owner and ruler, shall be for ever delivered from him as their judge and avenger: and there is no flying from his justice, but flying to his mercy.

**8.** Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: **9.** On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. **10.** But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. **11.** My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. **12.** Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food

Here, **1.** Job complains that he cannot understand the meaning of God's providence concerning him, but was quite at a loss about them, ver. 8, 9. *I go forward and he is not there, &c.* Eliphaz had bid him acquaint himself with God; so I would with all my heart, saith Job, if I knew how to get acquainted with him. He had himself a great desire to appear before God, and get a hearing of his case, but the Judge was not to be found; look which way he would, he could see no sign of God's appearing for him to clear up his innocency: Job, no doubt, believed that God is every where present; but three things he seems to complain of here, (1.) That he could not fix his thoughts, nor form any clear judgment of things in his own mind: his mind was so hurried and discomposed with his troubles, that he was like a man in a fright, or at his wit's end, that runs this way and that way, but being in confusion brings nothing to a head. By reason of the disorder and tumult his spirit was in, he could not fasten upon that which he knew to be in God, and which if he could but mix faith with it, and dwell upon it in his thoughts would be a support to him. It is the common complaint of those who are sick or melancholy, that when they would think of that which is good, they can make nothing of it.

(2.) That he could not find out the cause of his troubles, nor the sin which provoked God to contend with him: he took a view of his whole conversation, turned to every side of it, and could not perceive wherein he had sinned more than others; for which he should thus be punished more than others; nor could he discern what other end God should aim at in afflicting him thus. (3.) That he could not foresee what would be in the end hereof, whether God would deliver him at all, nor if he did, when or which way: he saw not his signs, nor was there any to tell him how long; as the church complains, *Psal. lxxiv. 9.* He was quite at a loss, what to think God would do with him; and whatever conjecture he advanced, still something or other appeared against it.

**2.** He satisfies himself with this, that God himself was a witness to his integrity, and therefore did not doubt but the issue would be good. After Job had almost lost himself in the labyrinth of the divine counsels, how contentedly doth he sit down at length with this thought, though I know not the way that he takes, for *his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters*; his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and it would be presumption in us to pretend to judge of them: Yet he knows the way that I take, ver. 10. That is, (1.) He is acquainted with it. His friends judged of that which they did not know, and therefore charged him with that which he was never guilty of; but God, who knew every step he had taken, would not do so, *Psal. cxxxix. 3.* Note, It is a great comfort to those who mean honestly, that God understands their meaning, though men do not, cannot, or will not. (2.) He approves of it: He knows that however I may sometimes have taken a false step, yet I have still taken a good way; have chosen the way of truth, and therefore he knows it, i. e. He accepts it, and is well pleased with it, as he is said to know the way of the righteous, *Psal. i. 6.* This comforted the prophet, *Jer. xii. 3.* *Thou hast tried my heart towards thee.* From this Job infers, when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. They that keep the way of the Lord, may comfort themselves when they are in affliction with these three things, (1.) That they are but tried; it is not intended for their hurt, but for their honour and benefit; *it is the trial of the faith, 1 Pet. i. 7.* (2.) That when they are sufficiently tried, they shall come forth out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it as dross or reprobate silver. The trial will have an end; *God will not contend for ever.* (3.) That they shall come forth as gold, pure in itself, and precious to the refiner: they shall come forth as gold approved and improved; found to be good, and made to be better. Afflictions are to us as we are; those that go gold into the furnace, will come out no worse.

Now that which encouraged Job to hope that his present troubles would thus end well, was the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had lived a good life in the fear of God.

**1.** That God's way was the way he walked in, ver. 11. *My foot hath held his steps, i. e.* held to them, held close to them: the steps he takes; I have endeavoured to conform myself to his example. Good people are followers of God; or, I have accommodated myself to his providence, and endeavoured to answer all the intentions of that; to follow providence step by step. Or, his steps are the steps he hath appointed me to take; the way of religion and serious godliness, that way I have kept, and have not declined



clined from it: not only not turned back from it by a total apostasy, but not turned aside out of it by any wilful transgression. His holding God's steps, and keeping his way, intimates that the tempter had used all his arts by fraud and force to draw him aside; but with care and resolution, he had by the grace of God hitherto persevered, and those that will do so must hold and keep, hold with resolution and keep with watchfulness.

2. That God's word was the rule he walked by, *ver. 12.* he governed himself by the commandment of God's lips; and would not go back from that, but go forward according to it. Whatever difficulties we may meet with in the way of God's commandments, though they lead us through a wilderness, yet we must never think of going back, but must press on towards the mark. Job kept close to the law of God in his conversation, for both his judgment and his affection led him to it. *I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food, i.e.* He looked upon it as his necessary food, could as well have lived without his daily bread, as without the word of God. I have laid it up, so the word is, as those that lay up provision for a siege: or as Joseph laid up corn before the famine. Eliphaz had bid him lay up God's words in his heart, chap. xxii. 22. So I do, saith he, and always did, that I might not sin against him; and that like the good householder, I might bring forth for the good of others. Note, The word of God is to our souls, as our necessary food is to our bodies; it sustains the spiritual life, and strengthens us for the actions of life; it is that which we cannot subsist without, and which nothing else can make up the want of: and we ought therefore so to esteem it, to take pains for it, hunger after it, feed upon it with delight, and nourish our souls with it; and this will be our rejoicing in the day of evil, as it was Job's here.

13. But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth 14. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him. 15. Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him 16. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me: 17. Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

Some make Job to complain here, that God dealt unjustly and unfairly with him, in proceeding to punish him without the least relenting or relaxation, though he had such incontestible evidences to produce of his innocence: I am loth to think holy Job would charge the holy God with iniquity; but his complaint is indeed bitter and peevish enough, and he reasons himself into a sort of a *patience per force*, which he cannot do without reflecting upon God, as dealing hardly with him; but he must bear it because he cannot help it; the worst he saith is, that God deals unaccountably with him.

1. He lays down good truths, and which were capable of a good improvement, *ver. 13, 14.*

(1.) That God's counsels are immutable. *He is in one mind, and who can turn him! He is one.* So some read it, or in one; he has no counsellors by whose interest he might be prevailed with to alter his purpose: he is one with himself, and never alters his mind, never alters his measures. Prayer has prevailed to change God's way and his providence, but never was his will or purpose changed; for *known unto God were all his works.*

(2.) That his power is irresistible. *What his soul desireth or designs, even that he doth, and nothing can stand in his way, or put him upon new counsels.* Men desire many things, which either they may not do, or cannot do, or dare not do; but God has an incontestible sovereignty; his will is so perfectly pure and right, that it is highly fit he should be arbitrary: and he has an uncontrollable power; *none can stay his hand. Whatever the Lord pleased that did he,* Psal. cxxxv. 6. and always will, for it is always best.

(3.) That all he doth, is according to the counsel of his will, *ver. 14.* *He performeth the thing that is appointed for me:* whatever happens to us, it is God that performs it, *Psal. lvii. 2.* and an admirable performance the whole will appear to be, when the mystery of God shall be finished. He performs all that, and that only that was appointed, and in the appointed time and method; this may silence us, for what is appointed cannot be altered. But to consider that when God was appointing us to eternal life and glory as our end, he was appointing to this condition, this affliction, whatever it is, in our way; this may do more than silence us, it may satisfy us, that it is all for the best; and though what he doth we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

(4.) That all he doth is according to the custom of his providence. *Many such things are with him, i.e.* He doth many things in the course of his providence which we can give no account of, but must resolve into his absolute sovereignty. Whatever trouble we are in, others have been in the like; our case is not singular, the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren, 1 Pet. v. 9. Are we sick or sore, impoverished and stripped, children removed by death, or friends unkind, this is what God has appointed for us, and many such things are with him. *Shall the earth be forsaken for us?*

2. He makes but a bad use of these good truths; had he duly considered them, he might have said, therefore am I easy and pleased, and well reconciled to the way of my God concerning me; therefore will I rejoice, in hopes that my troubles will issue well at last. No, *Therefore am I troubled at his presence, ver. 15.* Those are indeed of troubled spirits who are troubled at the presence of God; as the psalmist, who remembered God and was troubled, *Psal. lxxvii. 3.* See what confusion poor Job was now in, for he contradicted himself; just now he was troubled for God's absence, *ver. 8, 9.* now he is troubled at his presence, *When I consider I am afraid of him.* What he now felt made him fear worse: there is indeed that, which if we consider, we shall cause to be afraid of God; his infinite justice and purity, compared with our own sinfulness and vileness; but if withal we consider his grace in a Redeemer, and our compliance with that grace, the fears will vanish, and we shall see cause to hope in him.

See what impressions were made upon him by the wounds of his spirit.

(1.) He was very fearful, *ver. 14.* *The Almighty troubled him, and so made his heart soft; i.e.* utterly unable to bear any thing, and afraid of every thing that stirred: there is a gracious softness, like that of Josiah, whose heart was tender, and trembled at the word of God. This is meant of a grievous softness, which apprehends every thing that is present to be pressing, and every thing future to be threatening. (2.) He was very fretful, peevish indeed, for he quarrels with God, *ver. 17.* (1.) Because he did not die before his troubles, that he might never have seen them: *because I was not cut off before the darkness;* and yet if in the height of his prosperity he had received a summons to the grave, he would have thought it hard. This may help to reconcile us to death whenever it comes, that we do

not know what evil we may be taken away from. But when trouble is come, it is folly to wish we had not lived to see it, and it is better to make the best of it. (2.) Because he was left to live so long in his troubles, and darkness was not covered from his face, by his being hid in the grave: we should bear the darkness better than thus, if we would but remember, that to the upright there sometimes ariseth a marvellous light in the darkness; however, there is reserved for them a more marvellous light after it.

## C H A P. XXIV.

Job having, by his complaints in the foregoing chapter, given vent to his passion, and thereby gained some ease, breaks them off abruptly, and now applies himself to a farther discussion of the doctrinal controversy between him and his friends, concerning the prosperity of wicked people. That many live at ease who are yet ungodly and profane, and despise all the exercises of devotion, he had shewed, chap. xxi. Now here he goes farther, and shews that many who are mischievous to mankind, and do live in open defiance to all the laws of justice and common honesty; yet thrive and succeed in their unrighteous practices; and we do not see them reckoned with in this world. What he had said before, chap. xii. 6. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, he here enlargeth upon. He lays down this general proposition, *ver. 1.* That the punishment of wicked people is not so visible and apparent as his friends supposed; and then proves it by an induction of particulars. (1.) Those that openly do wrong to their poor neighbours, are not reckoned with, nor the injured righted, *ver. 2—12.* though they are very barbarous, *ver. 21, 22.* (2.) Those that secretly practise mischief, often go undiscovered and unpunished, *ver. 13—17.* (3.) That God punisheth such by secret judgments, and reserves them for future judgments, *ver. 18—20.* and *ver. 23—25.* So that upon the whole matter we cannot say, that all that are in trouble are wicked; for it is certain, all that are in prosperity are not righteous.

1. WHY, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they not know him, not see his days? 2. Some remove the land-marks: they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof. 3. They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge. 4. They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together. 5. Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work, rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children. 6. They reap every one his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked. 7. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold. 8. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter. 9. They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. 10. They cause him to go naked without cloathing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry. 11. Which make oil within their walls, and tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst. 12. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.

Job's friends had been very positive in it, that they should soon see the fall of wicked people, how much soever they might prosper for a while: by no means, saith Job, *though times are not hidden from the Almighty, yet they that know him do not presently see his day, ver. 1.* (1.) He takes it for granted that times are not hidden from the Almighty: past times are not hid from his judgment, (*Eccles. iii. 15.*) present times are not hid from his providence, (*Matt. x. 29.*) future times are not hid from his presence, (*Acts xv. 18.*) God governs the world, and therefore we may be sure he takes cognizance of it: bad times are not hid from him, though the bad men that make the times bad, say one to another, that he has forsaken the earth, *Psal. xciv. 6, 7.* Every man's times are in his hand and under his eye, and therefore it is in his power to make the times of wicked men in this world miserable: he foresees the time of every man's death, and therefore if wicked men die before they are punished for their wickedness, we cannot say, they escaped him by surprise; he foresaw it, nay, he ordered it. Before Job will enquire into the reasons of the prosperity of wicked men, he asserts God's omniscience, as one prophet in a like case asserts his righteousness, *Jer. xii. 1.* another his holiness, *Hab. i. 13.* another his goodness to his own people, *Psal. lxxiii. 1.* General truths must be held fast, though we may find it difficult to reconcile them to particular events. (2.) He yet asserts, that they that know him, i.e. wise and good people that are acquainted with him, and with whom his secret is, do not see his days, not the day of his judging for them, this was the thing he complained of in his own case, *chap. xxiii. 8.* That he could not see God appearing in his behalf to plead his cause: Nor the day of his judging against open and notorious sinners, this is called *his day, Psal. xxxvii. 13.* We believe that day will come, but we do not see it, because it is future, and its presages secret. (3.) Though this is a mystery of providence, yet there is a reason for it, and we shall shortly know why and wherefore the judgment is deferred; and even the wisest, and those that know God best, do not yet see it; God will exercise their faith and patience, and excite their prayers for the coming of his kingdom, for which they are to cry *day and night to him, Luke xviii. 7.*

For the proof of this, that wicked people prosper, he instances in two sorts of unrighteous ones, whom all the world saw thriving in their iniquity.

1. Tyrants, and those that do wrong under pretence of law and authority. It is a melancholy sight which has often been seen under the sun, wickedness in the place of judgment, *Eccles. iii. 16.* The unguarded tears of the oppressed, while on the side of the oppressors there were power, *Eccles. iv. 1.* The violent perverting of justice and judgment, *Eccles. v. 8.*

(1.) They disseize their neighbours of their real estates, which came to them by descent from their ancestors. They remove the land-marks, under pretence that they were misplaced, *ver. 2.* and so they encroached upon their neighbours rights, and think they effectually secure that to their posterity which they have got wrongfully, by making that to be an evidence for them, which should have been an evidence for the rightful



the rightful owner. This was forbidden by the law of Moses, *Deut. xix. 14.* under a curse, *Deut. xxvii. 17.* Forging or destroying deeds is now a crime equivalent to this here.

(2.) They dispossess them of personal estates under colour of justice, they violently take away flocks, pretending they are forfeited, and feed thereof; as the rich man took the poor man's ewe lamb, *2 Sam. xii. 4.* If a poor fatherless child hath but an ass of his own to get a little money with, they find some colour or other to take it away, because the owner is not able to contend with them. It is all one if a widow has but an ox, for what little husbandry she hath; under pretence of distraining for some small debt, or arrears of rent, this ox shall be taken for a pledge, though perhaps it is the widow's all. God has taken it among the titles of his honour to be a *father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows*: and therefore those will not be reckoned his friends, that do not to their utmost to protect and help them; but those he will certainly reckon with as his enemies that vex and oppress them.

(3.) They take all occasions to offer personal abuses to them, *ver. 4.* They will mislead them if they can, when they meet them on the highway, so that the poor and needy are forced to hide themselves from them; having no other way to secure themselves from them. They love in their hearts to banter people, and to make fools of them, and do them a mischief if they can, especially to triumph over a poor body, whom they turn out of the way of getting relief, threaten to punish them as vagabonds, and so force them to abscond, and laugh at them when they have done.

Some understand those barbarous actions, *ver. 9, 10.* to be done by those oppressors that pretend law for what they do. They *pluck the fatherless from the breast*, i. e. having made poor infants fatherless they make them motherless too: having taken away the father's life, they break the mother's heart, and so starve the children, and leave them to perish. Pharaoh and Herod plucked the children from the breast to the sword: and we read of *children brought forth to the murderers*, *Hos. ix. 13.* And those are inhuman murderers indeed, that can with so much pleasure suck innocent blood. They take a pledge of the poor, and so they rob the spittle; nay, they take the poor themselves for a pledge, as some read it, and probably it was under this pretence that they *plucked the fatherless from the breast*, distraining them for slaves, as *Neh. v. 5.* Cruelty to the poor is great wickedness, and cries aloud for vengeance. Those who shew no mercy to them that lie at their mercy, shall themselves have judgment without mercy.

Another instance of their barbarous usage of those they have advantage against, is, that they take from them even their necessary food and raiment: they squeeze them so with their extortion, that they make them go naked without clothing, *ver. 10.* and so catch their death. And if a poor hungry family has gleaned a sheaf of corn, to make a little cake of, that they may eat it and die; even that they take away from them, being well pleased to see them perish for want, while they themselves are fed to the full.

(4.) They are very oppressive to the labourers they employ in their service: they not only give them no wages, though the labourer is worthy of his hire; and this is a crying sin, *Sam. v. 4.* but they will not so much as give them meat and drink: *those that carry their sheaves are hungry*: so some read it, *ver. 10.* and it agrees with *ver. 11.* that those who *make oil within their walls*, and with a great deal of toil labour at the wine-presses, yet suffer thirst, which was worse than muzzling the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Those masters forget that they have a Master in heaven, who will not allow the necessary supports of life to their servants and labourers, not caring whether they can live by their labour.

(5.) It is not only among the poor country people, but in the cities also that we see the tears of the oppressed, *ver. 12.* *men groan from out of the city*, where the rich merchants and traders are as cruel with their poor debtors, as the landlords in the country are with their poor tenants. In cities such cruel actions as these are more observed than in obscure corners of the country, and the wronged have easier access to justice to right themselves, and yet the oppressors there fear neither the restraints of the law, nor the just censures of their neighbours; but the oppressed groan and cry out like wounded men, and can no more ease and help themselves, for the oppressors are inexorable, and deaf to their groans.

2. He speaks of robbers and rapparees, and those that do wrong by downright force, as the bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, which had lately plundered him: he doth not instance particularly in them, lest he should seem partial to his own cause, and to judge of men (as we are apt to do) by what they are to us: but among the Arabians, the children of the east (Job's country) there were those that lived by spoil and rapine, making incursions upon their neighbours, and robbing travellers. See how they are described here, and what mischief they do, *ver. 5, 6, 7, 8.*

(1.) Their character is that they are as wild asses in the desert, untamed, untractable, unreasonable, Ishmael's character, *Gen. xvi. 13.* fierce and furious, and under no restraint of law or government, *Jer. ii. 23, 24.* They choose the deserts for their dwelling, that they may be lawless and unfociable, and that they may have an opportunity of doing the more mischief. The desert is indeed the fittest place for such wild people, *Job xxxix. 6.* But no desert can set men out of the reach of God's eye and hand.

(2.) Their trade is to steal, and to make a prey of all about them. They have chosen it as their trade; it is their work, because there is more to be got by it, and is it gotten easier, than by any honest calling. They follow it as their trade, they follow it close; they go forth to it as their work, as a man goes forth to his labour, *Psal. civ. 23.* They are diligent and take pains at it, they rise betimes for a prey; if a traveller be out early they will be out as soon to rob him: they live by it as a man lives by his trade; the wilderness, not the grounds there but the road, there, *yield food for them and for their children*: they maintain themselves and their families by robbing on the high-way, and bless themselves in it without any remorse of compassion or conscience, and with as much security as if it were honestly got, as Ephraim, *Hos. xii. 7, 8.* (3.) See the mischief they do to the country. They not only rob travellers, but they make incursions upon their neighbours, and *reap every one his corn in the field*, *ver. 6. i. e.* They enter upon other people's ground, cut their corn and carry it away as freely as if it were their own: even *the wicked gather the vintage*, and it is their wickedness: or, as we read it, they gather the vintage of the wicked, and so one wicked man is made a scourge to another.

What the wicked got by extortion, which is their way of stealing, these robbers got from them in their way of stealing: thus oftentimes are the spoilers spoiled, *Isa. xxxiii. 1.* (4.) The misery of those that fall into their hands, *ver. 7, 8.* They cause the naked whom they have stripped, not leaving them clothes to their backs, to lodge in the cold nights without clothing, so that they are wet with the showers of the mountains; and for want of a better shelter, embrace the rock, and are glad of a cave or den in it to preserve them from the injuries of the weather. Eliphaz had charged Job with such inhumanity as this, concluding that providence would not thus have stripped him if he had not first

stripped the naked of their clothing, chap. xxii. 6. Job here tells him, there were those that were really guilty of those crimes with which he was unjustly charged, and yet prospered and had success in their villainies; the curse they laid themselves under working invisibly: and Job thinks it more just to argue as he did, from an open notorious course of wickedness to infer a secret and future punishment, than to argue as Eliphaz did, who from nothing else but a present trouble inferred a past course of secret wickedness.

The impunity of these oppressors and spoilers is expressed in one word, *ver. 12.* *Yet God layeth not folly to them*, i. e. he doth not immediately prosecute them with his judgments for these crimes, nor make them examples, and so evince their folly to all the world. He that gets riches and not by right, at his end shall be a fool, *Jer. xvii. 11.* But while he prospers he passes for a wise man, and God lays not folly to him until he faith, *Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, *Luke xii. 20.*

13. They are of those that rebel against the light, they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. 14. The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief. 15. The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face. 16. In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day-time: they know not the light. 17. For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death; if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

These verses describe another sort of sinners who therefore go unpunished, because they go undiscovered. They rebel against the light, *ver. 13.* Some understand it figuratively; they sin against the light of nature, the light of God's law, and that of their own consciences: they profess to know God, but they rebel against the knowledge they have of him, and will not be guided and governed, commanded and controuled by it. Others understand it literally: they have the day-light, and choose the night as the most advantageous season for their wickedness. Sinful works are therefore called *works of darkness*, because he that doth evil, hates the light, *John iii. 20.* knows not the ways thereof, i. e. keeps out of the way of it, or if he happen to be seen, he abides not where he thinks he is known. So that he here describes the worst of sinners, (1.) That sin willfully, and against the convictions of their own conscience, whereby they add rebellion to their sin. (2.) That sin deliberately, and with a great deal of plot and contrivance, using a thousand arts to conceal their villainies, fondly imagining that if they can but hide them from the eye of men, they are safe, but forgetting that there is no darkness or shadow of death in which the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from God's eye, *Job xxxiv. 22.*

He instances in three sorts of sinners that shun the light.

1. Murderers, *ver. 14.* They rise with the light, as soon as ever the day breaks, to kill the poor travellers that are up early, and abroad about their business, going to market with a little money or goods; and though it is so little that they are really to be called poor and needy, that with much ado get a sorry livelihood by their marketings, yet to get it the murderer will both take his neighbour's life, and venture his own; will rather play at such small game than sit out: nay, he kills for killing sake, thirsting more for blood than booty. See what care and pains wicked men take to compass their wicked designs, and let it shame us out of our negligence and slothfulness in doing good.

*Ut jugulent homines fargunt de nocte latrones,  
Tuque ut te servas non expergisceris?*

2. Adulterers: the eyes that are full of adultery, (2. Pet. ii. 14.) the unclean and wanton eyes wait for the twilight, *ver. 15.* The eye of the adulterer did so, *Prov. vii. 9.* Adultery hides its head for shame: the sinners themselves, even the most impudent, do what they can to hide it: *si non castè, tamen cautè*; and after all the wretched endeavours of the factors for hell, to take away the reproach of it, it is and ever will be a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret, *Eph. v. 12.* It hides its head also for fear, knowing that jealousy is the rage of a husband, who will not spare in the day of vengeance, *Prov. vi. 34, 35.* See what pains those take that make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust of it! pains to compass, and then to conceal that provision, which after all will be death and hell at last. Less pains would serve to mortify and crucify the flesh, which would be life and heaven at last: let the sinner change his heart, and then he needs not disguise his face, but may lift it up without spot.

3. House-breakers, *ver. 16.* These mark houses in the day time, mark the avenues of a house, and on which side they can most easily force their entrance, and then in the night dig through them, either to kill or steal, or commit adultery. The night favours the assault, and makes the defence the more difficult; for the good man of the house knows not what hour the thief will come, and therefore is asleep, *Luke xii. 39.* and he and his life exposed: for this reason our law makes burglary, which is the breaking and entering of a dwelling-house in the night-time, with a felonious intent, to be felony without benefit of clergy.

And lastly Job observes (and perhaps observes it as part of the present, though secret punishment of such sinners as these) that they are in a continual terror for fear of being discovered, *ver. 17.* *The morning is to them even as the shadow of death.* The light of the day, which is welcome to honest people, is a terror to ill people: They curse the sun, not as the Moors, because it scorseth them, but because it discovers them. If one know them, their consciences fly in their faces, and they are ready to become their own accusers; for they are in the terrors of the shadow of death. Shame came in with sin, and everlasting shame is at the end of it. See the misery of sinners, they are exposed to continual frights, and yet their folly that they are afraid of coming under the eye of man, but have no dread of God's eye, which is always upon them: and that they are not afraid of doing that which they are so terribly afraid of being known to do.

18. He is swift as the waters, their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards. 19. Draught and heat consume the snow-waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. 20. The womb shall forget him, the worm shall feed sweetly on him, he shall be no more remembered, and wickedness



wickedness shall be broken as a tree. 21. He evil entreateth the barren *that* beareth not: and doth not good to the widow. 22. He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no *man* is sure of life. 23. *Though* it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. 24. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone, and brought low, they are taken out of the way, as all *other*, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. 25. And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?

Job here in the conclusion of his discourse,

1. Gives some further instances of the wickedness of these cruel bloody men. (1.) Some are pirates and robbers at sea. To this many learned interpreters apply those difficult expressions, *ver. 18. He is swift upon the waters.* Privateers choose those ships that are the best failers: in these swift ships they cruise from one channel to another to pick up prizes: and this brings them in so much wealth that their *portion is cursed on the earth*, and they behold not the way of the vineyards, i. e. as Bishop Patrick explains it, they despise the employment of those who till the ground and plant vineyards as poor and unprofitable. But others make this a further description of the carriage of those sinners that are afraid of the light: if they be discovered, they get away as fast as they can, and choose to look not in the vineyards for fear of being discovered; but in some cursed portion, a lonely desolate place, which nobody looks after. (2.) Some are abusive to those that are in trouble, and add affliction to the afflicted. Barrenness was looked upon as a great reproach, and those that fall under that affliction they upbraid them with it, as Peninnah did Hannah, on purpose to vex them and make them to fret, which is a barbarous thing: this is *evil entreating the barren that beareth not*, *ver. 21.* or those that are childless, and so want the arrows others have in their quiver, which enable them to deal with their enemy in the gate. (*Psal. cxxvii. 5.*) He takes that advantage against, and is oppressive to them: as the fatherless, so the childless are in some degree helpless: and for the same reason it is a cruel thing to hurt the widow, to whom we ought to do good. And not doing good when it is in our power, is doing hurt. (3.) There are those who by injuring themselves to cruelty, come at last to be so exceeding boisterous, that they are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, *ver. 22.* He draws the mighty into a snare with his power, even the greatest are not able to stand before him when he is in his mad fits: he riseth up in his passion, and lays about him with so much fury, that no man is sure of his life; nor can he at the same time be sure of his own, for *his hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against him*, *Gen. xvi. 12.* One would wonder how any man can take a pleasure in making all about him afraid of him, yet there are those that do.

2. He shews that these daring sinners prosper, and are at ease for a while, nay, and many times end their days in peace, as Ishmael, who though he was a man of such a character as is here given, yet both *lived and died in the presence of all his brethren*, as we are told, *Gen. xvi. 12. xxv. 18.* Of these sinners here it is said, (1.) That it is *given them to be in safety*, *ver. 23.* They seem to be under the special protection of the divine providence; and one would wonder how they escape with life through so many dangers as they run themselves into. (2.) That they rest upon this, i. e. They rely upon this as sufficient to warrant all their violences: *because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily*, they think there is no great evil in them, and that God is not displeased with them, nor will ever call them to an account. Their prosperity is their security. (3.) That they are exalted for a while, they seem to be the favourites of heaven, and value themselves as making the best figure on earth. They are set up in honour, set up (as they think) out of the reach of danger, and lifted up in the pride of their own spirits. (4.) That at length they are carried out of the world very silently and gently, and without any remarkable disgrace or terror. "They go down to the grave as easily as snow-water sinks into the dry ground when it is melted by the sun." So Bishop Patrick explains *ver. 19.* And to the same purpose he paraphraseth *ver. 20. The womb shall forget him*, &c. "God sets no such mark of his displeasure upon him, but that his mother may soon forget him: the hand of justice doth not hang him on a gibbet for the birds to feed on; but he is carried to his grave like other men, to be the sweet food of worms: there he lies quietly, and neither he nor his wickedness are any more remembered than a tree which is broken to shivers." And *ver. 24. They are taken out of the way as all other*, i. e. They are shut up in their graves like all other men; nay, they die as easily (without those tedious pains which some endure) as an ear of corn is reaped with your hand." Compare this with Solomon's observation, *Ecc. viii. 12. I saw the wicked buried who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten.*

(3.) He foresees their fall however, and that their death, though they die in ease and honour, will be their ruin. *God's eyes are upon their ways*, *ver. 23.* Though he keep silence and seem to connive at them, yet he takes notice, and keeps account of all their wickedness, and will make it appear shortly, that their most secret sins, which they thought *no eye should see*, (*ver. 15.*) were under his eye, and will be called over again. Here is no mention of the punishment of these sinners in the other world, but it is intimated in the particular notice taken of the consequences of his death. (1.) The consumption of the body in the grave, though common to all, yet to him is in the nature of punishment for his sin. *The grave shall consume those that have sinned*; that land of darkness will be the lot of those who love darkness rather than light. The bodies they pampered shall be a feast for worms, which shall feed as sweetly on them as ever they fed on the pleasures and gains of their sins. (2.) Though they thought to make themselves a great name by their wealth and power, and mighty achievements, yet *their memorial is perished with them*, *Psal. ix. 6.* He that made himself so much talked of, when he is dead shall be no more remembered with honour: *his name shall rot*, *Prov. x. 7.* They that durst not give him his due character while he lived, shall not spare him when he is dead; so that the womb that bare him, his own mother shall forget him, i. e. shall avoid making mention of him, and shall think that the greatest kindness she can do him, since no good can be said of him. That honour which is got by sin will soon turn into shame. (3.) The wickedness they thought to establish in their families shall be broken as a tree; all their wicked projects shall be blasted, and all their wicked hopes dashed and buried with them. (4.) Their pride shall be brought down, and laid in the dust, *ver. 24.* and in mercy to the world they shall be taken out of the way, and all their power and prosperity shall be cut off; you may

seek him, and he shall not be found. Job owns that wicked people will be miserable at last, miserable on the other side death, but utterly denies what his friends asserted, that ordinarily they are miserable in this life.

Lastly, he concludes with a bold challenge to all that were present to disprove what he had said if they could, *ver. 25. If it be not so now, as I have opened, and if it do not from thence follow that I am unjustly condemned and censured, let them that can undertake to prove that my discourse is either (1.) False in itself, and then they prove me a liar; or (2.) Foreign and nothing to the purpose, and then they prove my speech frivolous and nothing worth. That indeed which is false is nothing worth; where there is not truth, how can there be goodness? but they that speak the words of truth and soberness, need not fear having what they say brought to the test, but can cheerfully submit it to a fair examination, as Job doth here.*

## C H A P. XXV.

Bildad here makes a very short reply to Job's last discourse, as one that began to be sick of the cause. He drops the main question concerning the prosperity of wicked men, as being unable to answer the proofs Job had produced in the foregoing chapter: but because he thought Job had made too bold with the divine majesty in his appeals to the divine tribunal, chap. xxiii. he in a few words shews the infinite distance there is between God and man, teaching us, (1.) To think highly and honourably of God, *ver. 2, 3, 5.* (2.) To think meanly of ourselves, *ver. 4, 6.* which however misapplied to Job, are two good lessons for us all to learn.

1. **T**HEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2. Dominion and fear are with him, he maketh peace in his high places. 3. Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise? 4. How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean *that is* born of a woman? 5. Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not: yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. 6. How much less than man *that is* a worm: and the son of man *which is* a worm?

Bildad is to be commended here for two things; (1.) For speaking no more to the matter about which Job and he differed. Perhaps he began to think Job was in the right, and then it was justice to say no more to it, as one that contended for truth, not for victory, and therefore for the finding of truth would be content to lose the victory; or if he still thought himself in the right, yet he knew when he had said enough, and would not wrangle endlessly for the last word. And, it may be, was one reason why he and the rest of them let fall this debate, because they perceived that Job and they did not differ so much in opinion as they thought: they owned that wicked people might prosper awhile, and Job owned they would be destroyed at last, and how little then was the difference! If disputants would understand one another better, perhaps they would find themselves nearer one another than they imagine. (2.) For speaking so well to the matter about which Job and he were agreed: If we would all get our hearts filled with awful thoughts of God and humble thoughts of ourselves, we should not be so apt as we are to fall out about matters of doubtful disputation, which are trifling or intricate.

Two ways Bildad takes here to exalt God and abase man.

1. He shews how bright and blessed and glorious God is, and from thence infers how guilty and impure man is before him, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* Let us see then,

(1.) What great things are here said of God, designed to possess Job with a reverence of him, and to check his reflections upon him, and upon his dealings with him.

(1.) God is the sovereign lord of all, and *with him is terrible majesty. Dominion and fear are with him*, *ver. 2.* He that gave being has an uncontrollable authority to give laws, and can enforce the laws he gives. He that made all, has a right to dispose of all according to his own will with an absolute sovereignty. Whatever he will do, he doth, and may do, and none can say to him what dost thou? or why dost thou so? *Dan. iv. 34.* His having dominion (or being *dominus*) speaks him both owner and ruler of all the creatures. They are all his, and they are all under his direction, and at his dispose. From hence it follows that he is to be feared, i. e. revered and obeyed, and that he is feared by all that know him; the seraphims cover their faces before him, and that first or last all will be made to fear him. Men's dominion is often despicable, often despised, but God is always terrible.

(2.) The glorious inhabitants of the upper world are all perfectly obedient of him, and entirely acquiesce in his will. *He maketh peace in his high places.* He enjoys himself in a perfect tranquillity: the holy angels never quarrel with him, nor with one another, but entirely acquiesce in his will, and unanimously execute it without murmuring or disputing: thus the will of God is done in heaven: and thus we pray it may be done by us and others on earth. The sun, moon, and stars keep their courses, and never clash with one another: Nay, even in this lower region, which is often disturbed with storms and tempests, yet when God pleaseth he commandeth peace, by *making the storm a calm*, *Psal. cvii. 29.*—*lxv. 7.* Observe the high places are his high places; for the heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's in a peculiar manner: peace is God's work, where it is made, it is he that makes it, *Isa. lvii. 19.* In heaven there is perfect peace; for there is perfect holiness, and there is God, who is love.

(3.) He is a God of irresistible power: *Is there any number of his armies?* *ver. 3.* The greatness and power of princes is judged of by their armies. God is not only himself almighty, but he has numberless numbers of armies at his beck and dispose; standing armies that are never disbanded; regular troops, and well disciplined, that are never to seek, never at a loss, never mutiny; veteran troops, that have been long in his service; victorious troops, that never failed of success, nor were ever foiled. All the creatures are his hosts, angels especially. He is Lord of all, Lord of Hosts. He hath numberless armies, and yet maketh peace; he could make war upon us, but is willing to be at peace with us; and even the heavenly hosts were sent to proclaim *peace on earth, and good will towards men*, *Luke ii. 14.*

(4.) His providence extends itself to all: *Upon whom doth not his light arise?* The light of the sun is communicated to all parts of the world, and take the year round, to all equally. See *Psal. xix. 6.* That is a faint resemblance of the universal cognizance and care God takes of the whole creation.



creation, *Mat. v. 45.* All are under the light of his knowledge, and are naked and open before him: All partake of the light of his goodness: it seems especially to be meant of that; He is good to all: The earth is full of his goodness. He is *Deus optimus*, as well as *maximus*: Has power to destroy; but his pleasure is to shew mercy. All the creatures live upon his bounty.

(2.) What ill things are said of man, and very truly and justly, *ver. 4.* *How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean?* Man is not only mean, but vile, not only earthy, but filthy; he cannot be justified, he cannot be clean. (1.) In comparison with God: Man's righteousness and holiness at the best is nothing to God's, *Psal. lxxxix. 6.* (2.) In debate with God. He that will quarrel with the word and providence of God, must unavoidably go by the worst. God will be justified, and then man will be condemned, *Psal. li. 4. Rom. iii. 4.* There is no error in God's judgment, and therefore there lies no exception against it, nor appeal from it. (3.) In the sight of God. If God be so great and glorious, how can man, who is so guilty and impure, appear before him? Note, 1. Man, by reason of his actual transgression, is obnoxious to God's justice, and cannot in himself be justified before him: He can neither plead not guilty, nor plead any merit of his own to balance or extenuate his guilt. The scripture has concluded all under sin. 2. Man, by reason of his original corruption, as he is born of a woman, is odious to God's holiness, and cannot be clean in his sight: God sees his impurity, and it is certain by it he is rendered utterly unfit for communion and fellowship with God in grace here, and for the vision and fruition of him in glory hereafter. We have need therefore to be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, and to be bathed again and again in the blood of Christ, that fountain opened.

2. He shews how dark and defective even the heavenly bodies are in the sight of God, and in comparison with him; and from thence infers how little, and mean, and worthless, man is.

1. The lights of heaven, though beauteous creatures, are before God but as *clouds of earth*, *ver. 5.* Behold, even to the moon, walking in brightness, and the stars, those glorious lamps of heaven, which the heathen are so charmed with the lustre of, that they worshipped them, yet in God's sight, in comparison with him, they shine not; they are not pure; they have no glory, by reason of the glory which excelleth. As a candle, though it burn, yet doth not shine when it is set in the clear light of the sun: Even the glory of God shining in his providence eclipseth the glory of the brightest creatures, *Isa. xxiv. 23.* *The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion.* The heavenly bodies are often clouded; we plainly see spots in the moon, and with the help of glasses may sometimes discern spots upon the sun too: But God sees spots in them we do not see: and how durst Job then so confidently appeal to God, who would discover that amiss in him, which he was not aware of in himself?

2. The children of men, though noble creatures, are before God but as *worms of the earth*, *ver. 6.* How much less doth man shine in honour, how much less is he pure in righteousness, *that is a worm! and the son of man, whoever he be, that is a worm!* A vermin, so some; not only mean and despicable, but noxious and detestable. A mite, so others; the smallest animal, which cannot be discerned with the naked eye, but through a magnifying glass: Such a thing is man. (1.) So mean and little, and inconsiderable, in comparison with God, and with the holy angels: So worthless and despicable, having his original in corruption, and hastening to corruption. What little reason has man then to be proud, and what great reason to be humble? (2.) So weak and impotent, and so easily crushed, and therefore a very unequal match for Almighty God. Shall man be such a fool to contend with his Maker, who can tread him to pieces easier than we can a worm? (3.) So dirty and filthy: Man is not pure, for he is a worm, hatched in putrefaction, and therefore odious to God. Let us therefore wonder at God's condescension in taking such worms as we are into covenant and communion with himself, especially at the condescension of the Son of God, in emptying himself so far as to say, *I am a worm, and no man*, *Psal. cxlii. 6.*

## C H A P. XXVI.

*This is Job's short reply to Bildad's short discourse, in which he is so far from contradicting him, that he confirms what he had said, and outdoes him in magnifying God, and setting forth his powers, to shew what reason he had still to say as he did, chap. xiii. 2.* What ye know, the same do I know also. (1.) He shews that Bildad's discourse was so foreign to the matter he was discoursing of: *Though very true and good, yet not to the purpose*, *ver. 2-4.* (2.) That it was needless to the person he was discoursing with; for he knew it, and believed it, and could speak of it as well as he, and better, and could add to the proofs which he had produced of God's power and greatness, which he doth in the rest of his discourse, *ver. 5-13.* concluding that *when they had both said what they could, all come short of the merit of the subject, and it was still far from being exhausted*, *ver. 14.*

1. **B**UT Job answered and said, 2. How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? 3. How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing, as it is? 4. To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?

One would not have thought that Job, now he was in so much pain and misery, should banter his friend as he doth here, and make himself merry with the impertinency of his discourse. Bildad thought he had made a fine speech, that the matter was so weighty, and the language so fine, that he had gained the reputation both of an oracle and of an orator; but Job peevishly enough shews that his performance was not so valuable as he thought it, and ridicules him for it. He shews,

1. That there was no great matter to be found in it, *ver. 3.* *How hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?* This is spoken ironically, upbraiding Bildad with the good conceit he himself had of what he had said. (1.) He thought he had spoken very clearly, had declared the thing as it is. He was very fond (as we are all apt to be) of his own notions, and thought they only were right and true, and intelligible, and all other notions of the thing were false, mistaken, and confused; whereas when we speak of the glory of God, we cannot declare the thing as it is; for we see it through a glass darkly, or but by reflection, and shall not see him as he is, till we come to heaven: Here we cannot order our speech concerning him, *Job xxxvii. 19.* (2.) He thought he had spoken very fully, though in few words, that he had plentifully declared it, and alas it was but poorly

and scantily that he had declared it, in comparison with the vast compass and copiousness of the subject.

2. That there was no great use to be made of it; *Cui bono?* What good hast thou done by all that thou hast said? *ver. 2.* *How hast thou with all this mighty flourish helped him that is without power?* *ver. 3.* *How hast thou with thy grave dictates counselled him that hath no wisdom?* Job would convince him, (1.) That he had done God no service by it, nor made him in the least beholden to him. It is indeed our duty and will be our honour to speak on God's behalf, but we must not think that he needs our service, or is indebted to us for it, nor will he accept it, if it come from a spirit of contention and contradiction, and not from a sincere regard to God's glory. (2.) That he had done his cause no service by it. He thought his friends were mightily beholden to him, for helping them at a dead lift to make their part good against Job, when they were quite at a loss, and had no strength, no wisdom. Even weak disputants, when warm, are apt to think truth more beholden to them than really it is. (3.) That he had done him no service by it. He pretended to convince, instruct, and comfort Job, but, alas, what he had said was so little to the purpose, that it would not avail to rectify any mistakes, nor to assist him either in bearing his afflictions, or in getting good by them, *ver. 4.* *To whom hast thou uttered words?* What is it to me that thou didst direct thy discourse; and dost thou take me for such a child as to need these instructions? or dost thou think them proper for one in my condition? Every thing that is true and good, is not suitable and seasonable. To one that was humbled, and broken, and grieved in spirit, as Job was, he ought to preach of the grace and mercy of God, rather than of his greatness and majesty, to lay before him the consolations rather than the terrors of the Almighty. Christ knows how to speak what is proper for the weary, *Isa. l. 4.* and his ministers should learn rightly to divide the word of truth, and to make those sad whom God would not have made sad; as Bildad did: and therefore Job asks him, *whose spirit came from thee?* *i. e.* What troubled soul would ever be revived and relieved, and brought to itself by such discourses as these? Thus are we often disappointed in our expectations from our friends that should comfort us, but the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, never mistakes in his operations, nor misseth of his end.

5. Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof. 6. Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. 7. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. 8. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the clouds is not rent under them. 9. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. 10. He hath compassed the waters with bounds until the day and night come to an end. 11. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof. 12. He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. 13. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. 14. Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

The truth received a great deal of light from the dispute between Job and his friend, concerning those points about which they differed; but now they are upon a head in which they were all agreed, the infinite glory and power of God. How doth truth triumph, and how bright doth it shine, when there appears no other strife between the contenders, but which shall speak most highly and honourably of God, and be most large in shewing forth his praise? It were well if all disputes about matters of religion might end thus, in glorifying God as Lord of all, and our Lord, *with one mind and one mouth*, *Rom. xv. 6.* for to that we have attained, in that we are all agreed. 1. Many illustrious instances are here given of the wisdom and power of God, in the creation and preservation of the world.

1. If we look about us, to the earth and waters here below, we shall see mighty instances of omnipotence, which we may gather out of these verses.

(1.) He hangs the earth upon nothing, *ver. 7.* The vast terraqueous globe neither rests upon any pillars, nor hangs upon any axle-tree, and yet by the almighty power of God, is firmly fixed in his place, poised with its own weight. The art of man could not hang a feather upon nothing, yet the divine wisdom holds the whole earth so. It is *ponderibus librata suis*, so saith the poet; it is upheld by the word of God's power, so saith the apostle. What is hung upon nothing may serve us to set our feet on, and bear the weight of our bodies, but it will never serve us to set our hearts on, nor bear the weight of our souls.

(2.) He sets bounds to the waters of the sea, and compasseth them in, *ver. 10.* that they may not return to cover the earth, and these bounds shall continue unmoved, unshaken, unworn, till the day and night come to an end, when time shall be no more. Herein appears the dominion which providence hath over the raging waters of the sea, and so it is an instance of his power, *Jer. v. 22.* And the care which providence takes of the poor sinful inhabitants of the earth, who, though obnoxious to his justice, and lying at his mercy, are thus preserved from being overwhelmed; as they were once by the waters of a flood, and will continue to be so, because they are reserved unto fire.

(3.) He forms dead things under the waters; *Rephaim, giants are formed under the waters*, *i. e.* Vast creatures of prodigious bulk, as whales, giant-like creatures, among the innumerable inhabitants of the water. So Bishop Patrick.

(4.) By mighty storms and tempests he shakes the mountains, which are here called the pillars of heaven, *ver. 11.* and even divideth the sea, and smiteth through its proud waves; *ver. 21.* At the presence of the Lord, the sea flies, and the mountains skip, *Psal. cxiv. 3, 4.* See *Hab. iii. 6, &c.* A storm furrows the waters, and doth as it were divide them; and then a calm smites through the waves, and lays them flat again. See *Psal. lxxxix. 9, 10.* Those who think Job lived at, or after the time of Moses, apply this to the dividing of the Red-sea before the children of Israel, and the drowning of the Egyptians in it: *By his understanding he smiteth through Rahab*, so the word is, and Rahab is often put for Egypt; as *Psal. lxxxvii. 4.* *Isa. li. 9.*

2. If we consider hell beneath, though it is out of our sight, yet we may conceive the instances of God's power there. By hell and destruction, *ver. 6.* we may understand not only the grave, and those that are buried in it, that they are under the eye of God, though laid out of our sight, which may



may strengthen our belief of the resurrection of the dead. God knows where to find, and whence to fetch all the scattered atoms of the consumed body: but we may take it as meant also of the place of the damned, where the separate souls of the wicked are in misery and torment. That is hell and destruction, which are said to be *before the Lord*, Prov. xv. 11. and here to be naked before him, to which it is probable there is an allusion, Rev. xiv. 10. where sinners are said to be tormented in the presence of the holy angels (who attended the Shechinah) and in the presence of the Lamb. And this may give light to ver. 5. which some ancient versions read thus; (and I think more agreeable to the signification of the word Rephaim) *Behold the giants groan under the waters, and those that dwell with them*; and then follows, *Hell is naked before him*, typified by the drowning of the giants of the old world; so the learned Mr. Joseph Mede understands it, and with it illustrates Prov. xxi. 16. where hell is called the congregation of the dead; and it is the same word which is here used, and which he would there have rendered the congregation of the giants, in allusion to the drowning of the sinners of the old world. And is there any thing in which the majesty of God appears more dreadful, than in the eternal ruin of the ungodly, and the groans of the inhabitants of the land of darkness? Those that will not with angels fear and worship, shall for ever with devils fear and tremble, and God therein will be glorified.

3. If we look up to heaven above, we shall see instances of God's sovereignty and power.

1. *He stretcheth out the north over the empty place*, ver. 7. So he did it at first, then *he stretched out the heavens like a curtain*, Psal. civ. 2. and still continues to keep them stretched out, and will do so till the general conflagration, when they shall be *rolled together as a scroll*, Rev. iv. 14. He instanteth in the north, because his country (as ours) lay in the northern hemisphere; and the air is the empty place over which it is stretched out, See Psal. lxxxix. 12. What an empty place is this world, in comparison with the other!

2. He keeps the waters that are said to be above the firmament, from pouring down upon the earth, as once they did, ver. 8. *He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds*, as if they were tied close in a bag, till there is occasion to use them; and notwithstanding the mighty weight of water so raised and laid up, yet *the cloud is not rent under them*, for then they would burst, and pour out as a spout, but they do, as it were, distil through the clouds, and so come drop by drop, in mercy to the earth, in small ruin, or great rain, as he pleases.

3. He conceals the glory of the upper world, the dazzling lustre of which we poor mortals could not bear, ver. 9. *He holds back the face of his throne*, that light in which he dwells, and *spreads a cloud upon it*, through which *he judgeth*, chap. xxii. 13. God will have us to live by faith, not by sense, for that is agreeable to a state of probation: It were not a fair trial, if the face of God's throne were as visible now, as it will be in the great day.

*Left his high throne, above expression bright,  
With deadly glory should oppress our sight;  
To break the dazzling force, he draws a screen  
Of subtle shades, and spreads his clouds between.*

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

4. The bright ornaments of heaven are the work of his hands, ver. 13. *By his Spirit*, the eternal Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters, *the breath of his mouth*, Psal. xxxiii. 6. *He hath garnished the heavens*, not only made them, but beautified them; has curiously bespangled them with stars by night, and painted them with the light of the sun by day. God having made man to look upward, (*Os homini sublime dedit*) has therefore garnished the heavens to invite him to look upward, that by pleasing his eye with the dazzling light of the sun and the sparkling light of the stars, their number, order, and various magnitudes, which as so many golden studs beautify the canopy which is drawn over our heads, he may be led to admire the great Creator, the Father and Fountain of lights, and to consider, if the pavement be so richly inlaid, what is the palace! If the visible heavens be so glorious, what are those that are out of sight! From the beautiful garniture of the anti-chamber, we may infer the precious furniture or the presence-chamber. If stars be so bright, what are angels! What is meant here by the crooked serpent, which his hands have formed, is not certain: some make it part of the garnishing of the heavens, the milky-way, say some; some particular constellation, so called, say others: it is the same word that is used for Leviathan, Isa. xxvii. 1. and probably may be meant of the whale or crocodile, in which appears much of the power of the Creator; and why may not Job conclude with that inference, when God himself doth so? chap. xli. 2. He concludes at last with an awful & *cætera*, ver. 14. *Lo, these are parts of his ways*, the out-goings of his wisdom and power, the ways in which he walks, and by which he makes himself known to the children of men. Here, (1.) He acknowledgeth with adoration the discoveries that were made of God. These things which he himself had said, and which Bildad had said are his ways, and this is heard of him; this is something of God. But, (2.) He admires the depth of that which is undiscovered. This that we have said, is but a part of his ways, a small part: What we know of God, is nothing in comparison with what is in God, and what God is: After all the discoveries which God has made to us, and all the inquiries we have made after Christ, still we are much in the dark concerning him, and must conclude, *Lo, these are but parts of his ways*. Something we hear of him by his works, and by his word; but alas! *How little a portion is heard of him!* Heard by us, heard from us; we know but in part, we prophesy but in part. When we have said all we can concerning God, we must even do as St. Paul doth, Rom. xi. 33. despairing to find the bottom, sit down at the brink, and adore the depth: *O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* It is but a little portion that we hear and know of God in our present state. He is infinite and incomprehensible; our understandings and capacities are weak and shallow, and the full discoveries of the divine glory are reserved for the future state. Even the thunder of his power, i.e. his powerful thunder, one of the lowest of his ways here in our own region, we cannot understand. See chap. xxxvii. 4, 5. Much less can we understand the utmost force and extent of his power, the terrible efforts and operations of it, and particularly the power of his anger, Psal. xc. 11. God is great, and we know him not.

### C H A P. XXVII.

Job had sometimes complained of his friends, that they were so eager in disputing, that they would scarce let him put in a word; Suffer me that I may speak; and O that you would hold your peace! But now it seems they were out of breath, and left him room to say what he would; either they were themselves convinced that Job was in the right, or they despaired of convincing him that he was in the wrong; and therefore they threw down the cudgels, and gave up the cause; Job was too hard for them, and forced them to quit the field; for great is the truth and will

prevail. What Job had said, chap. xxvi. was a sufficient answer to Bildad's discourse: and now Job paused a while, to see whether Zophar would take his turn again; but he declining it, Job himself went on, and without any interruption or vacation given him, said all he desired to say in this matter. (1.) He begins with a solemn protestation of his integrity, and of his resolution to hold it fast, ver. 2—6. (2.) He expressed the dread he had of that hypocrisy which they charged him with, ver. 7—10. (3.) He shews the miserable end of wicked people, notwithstanding their long prosperity, and the curse that attends them, and is entailed upon their families, ver. 11—23.

1. **M**oreover, Job continued his parable and said, 2. *As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul;* 3. *All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils;* 4. *My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.* 5. *God forbid that I should justify you: till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me.* 6. *My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.*

Job's discourse here is called a parable, (*Masbal*) the title of Solomon's proverbs, because it was grave and weighty, and very instructive: and he spake as one having authority: it comes from a word that signifies to rule, or have dominion, and some think it intimates that Job now triumphed over his opponents, and spake as one that had baffled them. We say of an excellent preacher, that he doth *dominari in concionibus*, he commands his hearers, Job did so here.

A long strife there had been between Job and his friends, they seemed disposed to have the matter compromised; and therefore since an oath for confirmation is an end of strife, Heb. vi. 10. Job here backs all he had said in maintenance of his own integrity with a solemn oath, to silence contradiction, and take the blame entirely upon himself if he did prevail. Observe,

1. The form of his oath, ver. 2. *As God liveth who hath taken away my judgment.* Here, (1.) He speaks highly of God, in calling him the living God, which means ever-living, the eternal God, that has life in himself; and in appealing to him as the sole and sovereign Judge: we can swear by no greater, and it is an affront to him to swear by any other. (2.) Yet he speaks hardly of him, and unbecomingly in saying that he had taken away his judgment, i.e. denied to do him justice in this controversy, and to appear in defence of him, and by continuing his troubles, on which his friends grounded their censures of him, had taken from him the opportunity he hoped ere now to have had of clearing himself. Elihu reproved him for this word, chap. xxiv. 3. for God is righteous in all his ways, and takes away no man's judgment. But see how apt we are to despair of favour, if it be not shewed us presently; so short-spirited are we, and so soon weary of waiting God's time. He also chargeth it upon God, that he had vexed his soul; had not only not appeared for him, but had appeared against him, and by laying such grievous afflictions upon him, had quite embittered his life to him, and all the comforts of it; we, by our impatience, vex our own souls, and then complain of God that he has vexed them. Yet see Job's confidence in the goodness both of his cause and of his God; that though God seemed to be angry with him, and to act against him for the present, yet he could cheerfully commit his cause to him.

2. The matter of his oath, ver. 3, 4. (1.) That he would not speak wickedness, nor utter deceit. That in general he would never allow himself in the way of lying; that as in this debate he had all along spoke as he thought, so he would never wrong his conscience by speaking otherwise: he would never maintain any doctrine, nor assert any matter of fact, but what he believed to be true; nor would he deny the truth, how much soever it might make against him: and whereas his friends charged him with being an hypocrite, he was ready to answer upon oath to all their interrogatories, if called to it. On the one hand he would not for all the world deny the charge, if he knew himself guilty, but would declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and take to himself the shame of his hypocrisy: on the other hand, since he was conscious to himself of his integrity, and that he was not such a man as his friends represented him, he would never betray his integrity, nor charge himself with that which he was innocent of; he would not be brought, no not by the rack of their unjust censures, falsely to accuse himself. If we must not bear false witness against our neighbour, then not against ourselves. (2.) That he would stick to this resolution as long as he lived, ver. 3. *All the while my breath is in me.* Our resolutions against sin should be thus constant, resolutions for life: in things doubtful and indifferent, it is not safe to be thus peremptory; we know not what reason we may see to change our mind, God may reveal even that unto us which now we are not aware of; but in so plain a thing as this, we cannot be too positive that we will never speak wickedness. Something of a reason for this resolution is here implied, that our breath will not always be in us; we must shortly breathe our last, and therefore while our breath is in us, we must never breathe wickedness and deceit, nor allow ourselves to say or do any thing which will make against us, when our breath shall depart. The breath in us is called the spirit of God, because he breathed it into us; and that is another reason why we must not speak wickedness. It is God that gives us life and breath, and therefore while we have breath we must praise him.

3. The explication of his oath, ver. 5, 6. *God forbid that I should justify you in your uncharitable censures of me, by owning myself a hypocrite: no, until I die, I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go.* (1.) He would always be an honest man, would hold fast his integrity, and not curse God, as Satan by his wife urged him to do, chap. ii. 9. Job here thinks of dying, and of getting ready for death, and therefore resolves never to part with his religion, though he had lost all he had in the world. Note, The best preparative for death, is perseverance to death in our integrity. *Until I die*, i.e. though I die by this affliction, I will not thereby be put out of conceit with my God and my religion. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* (2.) He would always stand to it, that he was an honest man; he would not remove, he would not part with the conscience, and comfort, and credit of his integrity; he was resolved to defend it to the last: God knows, and my own heart knows, that I always meant well, and did not allow myself in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of any known sin. This is my rejoicing, and no man shall rob me of it; I will never lie against my right. It has often been the lot of upright men to be censured and condemned as hypocrites; but it well becomes them to bear up boldly against such censures, and not to be discouraged by them, or think the worse of themselves for them; as the apostle, Heb. xiii. 18. *We have a good conscience,*



*science in all things willing to live honestly. Hic murus aheneus esto, nil confite sibi.* Job complained much of the reproaches of his friends; but (saith he) *my heart shall not reproach me, i. e.* I will never give my heart cause to reproach me, but will keep a conscience void of offence; and while I do so, I will not give my heart leave to reproach me: who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. To resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us when we give them cause to do so, is to affront God, whose deputy conscience is, and to wrong ourselves; for it is a good thing when a man hath sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. But to resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, while we still hold fast our integrity, is to baffle the design of the evil spirit, who tempts good Christians to question their adoption: *if thou be the son of God*; and to concur with the operations of the good Spirit, who witnesseth to their adoption.

7. Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. 8. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? 9. Will God hear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?

Job having solemnly protested the satisfaction he had in his integrity, for the farther clearing of himself, here expresseth the dread he had of being found an hypocrite.

1. He tells us how he startled at the thoughts of it, for he looked upon the condition of an hypocrite and a wicked man, to be certainly the most miserable condition that any man could be in, ver. 7. *Let mine enemy be as the wicked*: a proverbial expression, like that Dan. iv. 19. *The dream be to them that hate thee.* Job was so far from indulging himself in any wicked way, and flattering himself in it, that if he might have leave to wish the greatest evil he could think of to the worst enemy he had in the world, he would wish him the portion of a wicked man, knowing that worse he could not wish him. Not that we may lawfully wish any man to be wicked, or that any man who is not wicked, should be treated as wicked; but we should all choose to be in the condition of a beggar, an outlaw, a galley-slave, any thing rather than in the condition of the wicked, though in never so much pomp and outward prosperity.

2. He gives us the reasons of it.

1. Because the hypocrite's hopes will not be crowned, ver. 8. *For what is the hope of the hypocrite?* Bildad had condemned it, chap. viii. 13, 14. and Zophar, chap. xi. 20. and Job here concurs with them, and reads the death of the hypocrite's hope with as much assurance as they had done; and this slyly comes in as a reason why he should not remove his integrity, but still hold it fast. Note, The consideration of the miserable condition of wicked people, and especially hypocrites, should engage us to be upright, for we are undone, forever undone, if we be not; and also to get the comfortable evidence of our uprightness; for how can we be easy, if the great concern lieat uncertainties? Job's friends would persuade him, that all his hope was but the hope of the hypocrite, chap. iv. 6. Nay, saith he, I would not for all the world be so foolish as to build upon such a rotten foundation; for *what is the hope of the hypocrite?* See here, (1.) The hypocrite deceived. He hath gained, and he hath hope; this is his bright side; it is allowed that he hath gained by his hypocrisy, has gained the praise and applause of men, and the wealth of this world. Jehu gained a kingdom by his hypocrisy, and the Pharisees many a widow's house: Upon this gain he builds his hopes, such as it is; he hopes he is in good circumstances for another world, because he finds he is for this, and he blesseth himself in his own way. (2.) The hypocrite undeceived, he will at last see himself wretchedly cheated: For, (1.) God shall take away his soul for ever against his will, Luke xii. 20. *Thy soul shall be required of thee*: God, as the judge, takes it away to be tried and determined to its everlasting state: He shall then fall into the hands of the living God, to be dealt with immediately. (2.) What will this hope be then? It will be vanity and a lie, it will stand him in no stead. The wealth of this world which he hoped in, he must leave behind him, Psal. xlix. 17. The happiness of the other world, which he hoped for, he will certainly miss of; he hoped to go to heaven; but he will be shamefully disappointed; he will plead his external profession, privileges and performances, but all his pleas will be over-ruled as frivolous, *Depart from me, I know you not.* So that upon the whole matter, it is certain, a formal hypocrite, with all his gains and his hopes, will be certainly miserable in a dying hour.

2. Because the hypocrite's prayer will not be heard, ver. 9. *Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?* No, he will not, it cannot be expected he should. If true repentance come unto him, God will hear his cry, and accept him, Isa. i. 18. But if he continue impenitent and unchanged, let him not think to find favour with God. Observe, (1.) *Trouble will come upon him*, certainly it will: Troubles in the world often surprise those that are most secure of an uninterrupted prosperity: However, death will come, and trouble with it, when he must leave the world and all his delights in it: The judgment of the great day will come; fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites, Isa. xxxiii. 14. (2.) Then will he cry to God; will pray, and pray earnestly. Those that in prosperity slight God, either prayed not at all, or were cold and careless in prayer, when trouble comes, will make their application to him, and cry as men in earnest. But, (3.) *Will God hear him then?* In the troubles of this life? God hath told us, that he will not hear the prayers of those that regard iniquity in their hearts, Psal. lxxvi. 18. and set up their idols there, Ezek. xiv. 4. nor of those that turn away their ear from hearing the law, Prov. xxviii. 9. *Get you to the gods whom you have served*, Judg. x. 24. In the judgment to come, it is certain God will not hear the cry of those that lived and died in their hypocrisy. Their doleful lamentation will all be unpitied: *I will laugh at your calamity.* Their importunate petitions will all be thrown out, and their pleas rejected: Inflexible justice cannot be biassed, nor the irreversible sentence revoked. See Math. vii. 22, 23. Luke xiii. 26, and the case of the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. 11.

3. Because the hypocrite's religion is neither comfortable nor constant, ver. 10. *Will he delight himself in the Almighty?* No, not at any time, for his delight is in the profits of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh more than in God; especially not in time of trouble: *Will he always call upon God?* No, in prosperity he will not call upon God, but slight him; in adversity he will not call upon God, but curse him; he is weary of his religion, when he gets nothing by it, or is in danger of losing. Note, 1. Those are hypocrites, who though they profess religion, neither take pleasure in it, nor persevere in it; that reckon their religion a task and a drudgery, a weariness, and snuff at it; that make use of it only to serve a turn, and lay it aside when the turn is served; that will call upon God, while it is in fashion, or while the pang of devotion lasts, but leave it off

when they fall into other company, or when the hot fit is over. 2. The reason why hypocrites do not persevere in religion, is because they have no pleasure in it. They do not delight themselves in the Almighty, will not always call upon him. The more comfort we find in our religion, the more close we shall cleave to it: Those that have no delight in God, are easily inveigled by the pleasures of sense, and so drawn away from their religion; and they are easily run down by the crosses of this life, and so driven away from their religion, and will not always call upon God.

11. I will teach you by the hand of God: that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. 12. Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it, why then are ye thus altogether vain? 13. This is the portion of a wicked man, with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. 14. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. 15. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep. 16. Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; 17. He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. 18. He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh. 19. The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not. 20. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. 21. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place. 22. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand. 23. Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

Job's friends had seen a great deal of the misery and destruction that attends wicked people, especially oppressors; and Job, while the heat of disputation lasted, had said as much, and with as much assurance of their prosperity; but now the heat of the battle was pretty well over, he was willing to own how far he agreed with them, and where the difference between his opinion and theirs lay. (1.) He agreed with them, that wicked people are miserable people; that God will certainly reckon with cruel oppressors, and one time or other, one way or other, his justice will make reprisals upon them for all the affronts they have put upon God, and all the wrongs they have done to their neighbours. This truth abundantly confirmed by the entire concurrence even of those angry disputants in it. But, (2.) In this they differed, they held that these deserved judgments are presently and visibly brought upon wicked oppressors, that *they travel with pain all their days*, that in prosperity *the destroyer comes upon them*; that *they shall not be rich*, nor their branch green, and that *their destruction shall be accomplished before the time*; so Eliphaz, chap. xv. 20, 21, 29, 32; that *the steps of their strength shall be straitened*; that *terrors shall make them afraid on every side*; so Bildad, chap. xviii. 7—11. That he himself *shall vomit up his riches*, and that *in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits*; so Zophar, chap. xx. 15—22. Now Job held, that many times judgements do not fall upon them quickly, but are deferred for some time: That vengeance strikes slowly he had already shewed, chap. xxi. and xxiv. now he comes to shew that it strikes surely and severely, and that reprieves are no pardons.

§ 1. Job here undertakes to set this matter in a true light, ver. 11, 12. *I will teach you*: And we must not disdain to learn even from those that are sick and poor, yea, and peevish too, if they deliver what is true and good. Observe, (1.) What he would teach them, *That which is with the Almighty, i. e.* the counsels and purposes of God concerning wicked people, which are hid with him, and which you cannot hastily judge of: And the usual methods of his providence concerning them: This, saith Job, *will I not conceal*: What God has not concealed from us, we must not conceal from those we are concerning to teach: *Things revealed belong to us and our children.* (2.) How he would teach them, *by the hand of God, i. e.* by his strength and assistance. Those that undertake to teach others, must look to the hand of God to direct them, to open their ear, Isa. l. 4. and to open their lips. Those whom God teacheth with a strong hand are best able to teach others, Isa. viii. 11. (3.) What reason they had to learn those things which he was about to teach them, ver. 12. That it was confirmed by their own observation, *you yourselves have seen it*; but what we have heard, and seen, and known, we have need to be taught, that we may be perfect in our lesson; and that it would set them to rights in their judgment concerning him; *Why then are ye thus altogether vain*, to condemn me for a wicked man because I am afflicted? Truth rightly understood and applied, would cure us of that vanity of mind which ariseth from our mistakes.

That particularly which he offers now to lay before them, is *the portion of a wicked man with God*, particularly of oppressors, ver. 13. compare chap. xx. 29. Their portion in the world may be wealth and preferment, but their portion with God is ruin and misery. They are above the control of any earthly power, it may be, but the Almighty can deal with them.

2. He doth it, by showing that wicked people may in some instances prosper, but ruin follows them in those very instances, and that is their portion, that is their heritage, that is it which they must abide by.

1. They may prosper in their children, but ruin attends them. *His children, perhaps are multiplied*, ver. 14 or magnified, so some; they are very numerous, and are raised to honour and great estates. Worldly people are said to be *full of children*, Psal. xvii. 14. and as it is in the margin there, *their children are full*. In them the parents hope to live, and in their preferment to be honoured. But the more children they leave, and the greater prosperity they leave them in, the more and fairer marks do they leave for the arrows of God's judgment to be levelled at: *His three fore judgments, sword, famine, and pestilence*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. (1.) Some of them shall die by the sword, the sword of war perhaps; they brought them up to live by the sword, as Elau, chap. xxvii. 40. and those that do so, commonly die by the sword, first or last: or by the sword of justice for their crimes, or the sword of the murderer for their estates. (2.) Others of them shall die by famine, ver. 14. *His offspring shall not be satisfied with bread*: He thought he had secured them large estates, but it may happen that they may be reduced to poverty, so as not to have the necessary supports of life, at least not to live comfortably. They shall be so needy, that they shall not have a competency of necessary food, and so greedy, or so discontented, that what they have they shall not be satisfied with, because not so much, or not so dainty as what they have been use to. *Ye eat, but ye have not enough*, Hag. i. 6. (3.) Those that remain shall be buried in death, i. e. shall die



die of the plague, which is called death, *Rev. vi. 8.* and buried privately and in haste, as soon as they are dead, without any solemnity; *buried with the burial of an ass*; and even their widows shall not weep; they shall not have wherewithal to put them in mourning. Or it notes that these wicked men, as they live undesired, so they die unlamented, and even their widows will think themselves happy that they are got rid of them.

2. They may prosper in their estates, but ruin attends them too, *ver. 16, 17, 18.* (1.) We will suppose them to be rich in money and plate, in clothing and furniture: *They heap up silver in abundance as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay*: They have heaps of clothes about them, as plentiful heaps of clay; or it intimates that they have such abundance of clothes that they are even a burthen to them: *they lade themselves with thick clay*, *Hab. ii. 6.* See what is the care and business of worldly people, to heap up worldly wealth. Much would have more; until the silver is cankered, and the garments moth-eaten, *Jam. v. 2, 3.* But what comes of it? He shall never be the better for it himself; death will strip him, death will rob him, if he be not robbed and stripped sooner, *Luke xii. 20.* Nay, God will so order it, that the just shall wear his raiment, and the innocent shall divide his silver. (1.) They shall have it and divide it among themselves; some way or other providence shall so order it, that good men shall come honestly by that wealth which the wicked man came dishonestly by. *The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, *Prov. xxiii. 22.* God disposeth of men's estates as he pleaseth, and often makes their wills against their wills. The just, whom he hated and persecuted, shall have rule over all his labour, and in due time recover with interest what was violently taken from him. The Egyptian jewels were the Israelites pay. Solomon observes, *Ecc. ii. 26.* that God makes the sinners drudges to the righteous; for to the sinner he gives travel to gather and heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. (2.) They shall do good with it, the innocent shall not hoard the silver, as he did that gathered it, but shall divide it to the poor; shall give a portion to seven, and also to eight, which is laying up the best securities. Money is like muck, good for nothing if it be not spread. When God enricheth good men, they must remember they are but stewards, and must give an account. What bad men bring a curse upon their families with the ill-getting of, good men bring a blessing upon their families with the well-using of. *He that by unjust gain increaseth his substance, shall gather it for him that will pity the poor*, *Prov. xxviii. 8.* (2.) We will suppose them to have built them strong and stately houses; but they are like the house which the moth makes for herself in an old garment, out of which she will soon be shaken, *ver. 18.* He is very secure in it, as a moth, and has no apprehension of danger, but it will prove of a short continuance, as a booth which the keeper makes, which will be quickly taken down and gone, and his place shall know him no more.

3. Destruction attends their persons, though they lived long in health, and at ease, *ver. 19.* *The rich man shall lie down to sleep, to repose himself in the abundance of his wealth, Soul take thine ease*; shall lie down in it as his strong city, and seem to others to be very happy, and very easy; *but he shall not be gathered, i. e.* he shall not have his mind composed and settled, and gathered in to enjoy his wealth. He doth not sleep contentedly as people think he doth: *He lies down, but his abundance will not suffer him to sleep*, at least not so sweetly as the labouring man, *Eccles. v. 12.* He lies down, but he is full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, and then he opens his eyes, and he is not, he sees himself and all he has hastening away, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye. His cares increase his fears, and both together make him uneasy. So that when we attend him to his bed, we do not find him happy there: But in the close we are called to attend his exit, and see how miserable he is in death, and after death.

1. He is miserable in death: It is to him the king of terrors, *ver. 20, 21.* When some mortal disease seizeth him, what a fright he is in? *Terrors take hold on him as waters*, as if he were surrounded by the flowing tides. He trembles to think of leaving this world, and much more of removing to another. This mingles sorrow and wrath with his sickness, as Solomon observes, *Ecc. v. 17.* These terrors put him either, (1.) Into a silent and fallen despair, and then the tempest of God's wrath, the tempest of death, may be said to steal him away in the night, when no one is aware, or takes any notice of it. Or, (2.) Into an open and clamorous despair, and then he is said to be carried away, and hurled out of his place, as with a storm, and with an east wind, violent and noisy, and very dreadful. Death to a godly man is like a fair gale of wind to transport him to the heavenly country, but to a wicked man is like an east wind, a storm, a tempest, that hurries him away in confusion and amazement to destruction.

2. He is miserable after death.

1. His soul falls under the just indignation of God, and the terror of that puts him into such amazement at the approach of death, *ver. 22.* *For God shall cast upon him, and not spare.* While he lived he had the benefit of sparing mercy, but now the day of God's patience is over, and he will not spare, but pour out upon him the full vials of his wrath. What God casts down upon a man there is no flying from, nor bearing up under. We read of his casting down great stones from heaven upon the Canaanites, *Josh. x. 11.* which made terrible execution among them; but what was that to his casting down his anger in its full weight upon the sinner's conscience, like the talent of lead, *Zech. v. 7, 8.* The damned sinner seeing the wrath of God break in upon him, would fain flee out of his hand, but he cannot, the gates of hell are locked and barred, and the great gulph fixed, and it will be vain to call for the shelter of rocks and mountains. Those that will not be persuaded now to fly to the arms of divine grace, which are stretched out to receive them, will not be able to flee from the arms of divine wrath, which will shortly be stretched out to destroy them.

2. His memory falls under the just indignation of all mankind, *ver. 23.* *Men shall clap their hands at him, i. e.* they shall rejoice in the judgments of God, by which he is cut off, and be well pleased in his fall. *When the wicked perish there is shouting*, *Prov. x. 10.* When God buries him, men shall hiss him out of his place, and leave on his name perpetual marks of infamy. In the same place where he has been carressed and cried up, he shall be laughed at, *Psal. lii. 7.* and his ashes shall be trampled on.

## C H A P. XXVIII.

*The strain of this chapter is very unlike the rest of this book: Job forgets his sorrows, and all his sorrows, and talks like a philosopher, or a virtuoso: Here is a great deal, both of natural philosophy and moral, in this discourse; but the question is how it comes in here. Doubtless it was not merely for an amusement, or diversion from the controversy, and if it had been only so, perhaps it had not been much missed. When disputes grow hot, better lose the question, than lose our temper. But this is pertinent, and to the business in hand. Job and his friends had been discoursing about the dispensations of providence towards the wicked and the righteous. Job had shewed that some wicked men live and die in prosperity, while others are presently and openly afflicted by the judgments of God: But if any ask the reason why some are punished in this world, and not others, they must be told it is a ques-*

*tion that cannot be resolved. The knowledge of the reasons of state in God's government of the world is kept from us, and we must neither pretend to it, nor reach after it. Zophar had wished that God would shew Job the secrets of wisdom, chap. xi. 6. No, saith Job, secret things belong not to us, but things revealed, Deut. xxix. 29. And here he shews, (1.) Concerning worldly wealth, how industriously that is sought for, and pursued by the children of men, what pains they take, what contrivances they have, and what hazards they run to get it, ver. 1—11. (2.) Concerning wisdom, ver. 12. In general, the price of it is very great; it is of inestimable value, ver. 15—19. The place of it is very secret, ver. 14, 20, 22. In particular, there is a wisdom which is hid in God, ver. 23—27. And there is a wisdom which is revealed to the children of men, ver. 23. Our enquiries into the former must be checked, into the latter must be quickened, for that is it which is our concern.*

1. **SURELY** there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they find it. 2. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone. 3. He setteth an end to darkness and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. 4. The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant: even the waters forgotten of the foot; they are dried up, they are gone away from men. 5. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread; and under it is turned up as it were fire. 6. The stones of it are the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold. 7. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vultures eye hath not seen. 8. The lions whelps hath not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. 9. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots. 10. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks, and his eye seeth every precious thing. 11. He bindeth the floods from overflowing, and the thing that is hid, bringeth he forth to light.

Here Job shews, (1.) What a great way the wit of man may go in diving into the depths of nature, and seizing the riches of it, what a great deal of knowledge, and a great deal of wealth men may by their ingenious and industrious searches make themselves masters of. But doth it therefore follow that men may by their wit comprehend the reasons why some wicked people prosper, and others are punished, why some good people prosper, and others are afflicted? No by no means: The caverns of the earth may be discovered, but not the counsels of heaven. (2.) What a great deal of care and pains worldly men take to get riches. He had observed concerning the wicked man, *chap. xxvii. 16.* that he *heaped up silver as the dust*, now here he shews whence that silver came, and how it was come by, which he is so fond of, to shew what little reason wicked rich men have to be proud of their wealth and pomp. Observe here,

1. The wealth of this world is hid in the earth. Thence the silver and the gold which afterwards they refine, is fetched, *ver. 1.* There it lay mixed with a great deal of dirt and dross, like a worthless thing, of no more account than common earth, and abundance of it will so lie neglected, till the earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up. Holy Mr. Herbert, in his poem called *Avarice*, takes notice of this, to shame men out of the love of money.

*Money, thou bane of bliss, thou source of woe,  
Whence cam'st thou that thou art so fresh and fine?  
I know thy parentage is base and low;  
Man found thee poor and dirty in a mine.*

*Surely thou didst so little contribute  
To this great kingdom which thou now hast got;  
That he was vain, when thou wast destitute,  
To dig thee out of thy dark cave and grot, &c.*

*Man cullerth thee his wealth, who made thee rich,  
And while he digs out thee, falls in the ditch.*

Iron and brass, though less valuable, but more serviceable metals, are taken out of the earth, *ver. 2.* and are there found in great abundance, which abates their price indeed; but is a great kindness to man, who could much better be without gold than without iron. Nay, out of the earth comes bread, *i. e.* Bread-corn, the necessary support of life, *ver. 5.* Thence man's maintenance is fetched to mind him of his own original, he is of the earth, and hastening to the earth. Under it is turned up, as it were fire, precious stones that sparkle as fire: brimstone, that is apt to take fire; coal, that is proper to feed fire. As we have our food, so we have our fuel cut out of the earth: There the sapphires and other gems are, and thence gold-dust is digged up, *ver. 6.* The wisdom of the Creator has placed these things, (1.) Out of our sight, to teach us not to set our eyes upon them, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* (2.) Under our feet, to teach us not to lay them in our bosoms, nor to set our hearts upon them, but to trample upon them with a holy contempt. See how full the earth is of God's riches, *Psal. civ. 24.* and infer from thence not only how great a God he is, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, *Psal. xxiv. 1.* but how full heaven must needs be of God's riches, which is the city of the great king, in comparison with which this earth is a poor country.

2. The wealth that is hid in the earth cannot be come at but with a great deal of difficulty. It is hard to be found out, there is but here and there a vein for the silver, *ver. 1.* The precious stones, though bright themselves, yet because buried in obscurity, and out of sight, are called stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. Men may search long before they light on them; when found out, is hard to be fetched out; men's wits must be set on work to contrive ways and means to get this hid treasure into their hands, they must with their lamps set an end to darkness: and if one expedient miscarry, one method fail, they must try another, till they have searched out all perfection, and turned every stone to effect it, *ver. 3.* They must grapple with subterraneous waters, *ver. 4—10, 11.* and force their way through rocks which are, as it were, the roots of the mountains, *ver. 9.* Now God has made the getting of gold and silver, and precious stones, so difficult, (1.) For the exciting and engaging of industry. *Dii laboribus omnia cadunt.* If valuable things were too easily come by, men would never learn to take pains: but the difficulty of gaining the riches of this earth, may suggest to us what violence the kingdom of heaven suffers. (2.) For the checking and restraining



restraining of pomp and luxury. What is for necessity is had with a little labour from the surface of the earth, but what is for ornament must be digged with a great deal of pains out of the bowels of it. To be fed is cheap, but to be fine is chargeable.

3. Though the subterraneous wealth is thus hard to come by, yet men will have it. He that loveth silver is not satisfied with silver, and yet is not satisfied without it, but they that have much must needs have more. See here, (1.) What inventions men have to get this wealth: They *search out all perfection*, ver. 3. They have arts and engines to dry up the waters, and carry them off when they break in upon them in their mines, and threaten to drown the work, ver. 4. They have pumps and pipes, and canals to clear their way, and obstacles being removed, they tread *the path which no fowl knoweth*, ver. 7, 8. Unseen by the vulture's eye, which is piercing and quick sighted, and untrod by the lions whelps, that traverse the paths of the wilderness. (2.) What pains men take, and what vast charge they are at to get this wealth; they work their way through the rocks, and undermine the mountains, ver. 10. (3.) What hazards they run: They that dig in the mines have their lives in their hands; for they are fain to *bind the floods from overflowing*, ver. 11. and are continually in danger of being suffocated by damps, or crushed or buried alive by the fall of the earth upon them. See how foolish man adds to his own burden; he is sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his face: But as if that were not enough, he will get gold and silver in the peril of his life; though the more is gotten, the less valuable it is; for in Solomon's time silver was as stones. But, (1.) Observe what it is that carries men through all this toil and peril; *their eye see every precious thing*, ver. 10. Silver and gold are precious things with them, and they have them in their eye in all these pursuits: they fancy they see them glittering before their faces, and in the prospect of laying hold of them, they make nothing of all these difficulties; for (lastly) they make something of it at last, *that which is hid bringeth he forth to light*, ver. 11. What was hid under the ground is laid upon the bank; the metal that was hid in the ore, is refined from its dross, and brought forth pure out of the furnace, and then he thinks his pains well bestowed. Go to the miners then thou sluggard in religion, consider their ways, and be wise. Let their courage, diligence, and constancy in seeking the wealth that perisheth, shame us out of slothfulness and faint-heartedness in labouring for true riches. *How much better is it to get wisdom than gold?* much easier, much safer, yet gold is sought for, but grace neglected. Will the hopes of precious things out of the earth, (so they call them, though really they are paltry and perishing) be such a spur to industry, and shall not the certain prospect of truly precious things in heaven be much more so?

12. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? 13. Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. 14. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me. 15. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. 16. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. 17. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. 18. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. 19. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

Job having spoken of the wealth of the world, which men put such a value upon, and take so much pains for, here comes to speak of another more valuable jewel, and that is wisdom and understanding, the knowing and enjoying of God and ourselves. They that found out all those ways and means to enrich themselves, thought themselves very wise: but Job will not own that to be wisdom; he saith, *where is wisdom?* for it is not here; this their way is their folly; We must therefore seek it somewhere else, and it will be found no where but in the principles and practices of religion. There is more true religion, satisfaction, and happiness in found divinity, which shews us the way to the joys of heaven, than in natural philosophy or mathematics, which help us to find a way into the bowels of the earth.

Two things cannot be found out concerning this wisdom.

1. The price of it, for that is inestimable, its worth infinitely more than all the riches in this world. *Man knows not the price thereof*, ver. 13. i. e. (1.) Few put a due value upon it. Men know not the worth of it, its infinite excellency, their need of it, and of what unspeakable advantage it will be to them; and therefore though they have many a price in their hand to get this wisdom, yet they *have no heart to it*, Prov. xvii. 16. The cock in the fable knew not the value of the precious stone he found in the dug-hill, and therefore would rather have light on a barley-corn. Men know not the worth of grace, and therefore will take no pains to get it. (2.) None can possibly give a valuable consideration for it, with all the wealth this world can furnish them with. This Job is large upon, ver. 15, &c. where he makes an inventory of the *Bona notabilia*, the most valuable treasures of this world, gold is five times mentioned, silver comes in also, and then divers precious stones, the onyx and sapphire, pearls and rubies, and the topaz of Ethiopia, these are the things that are highest prized in the world's markets: but if a man would give, not only these, heaps of these, but all the substance of his house, all he is worth in the world for wisdom, it would utterly be contemned: these may give a man some advantage in seeking wisdom, as they did to Solomon, but there is no purchasing wisdom with these. It is a gift of the *Holy Ghost* which *cannot be bought with money*, Acts viii. 20. As it doth not run in the blood, and so come to us by descent, so it cannot be got for money, nor doth it come to us by purchase. Spiritual gifts are conferred without money and without price, because no money can be a price for them. Wisdom is likewise a more valuable gift to him that has it, makes him richer and happier than gold or precious stones. It is *better to get wisdom than gold*. Gold is another's, wisdom our own? gold is for the body and time, wisdom is for the soul and eternity. Let that which is most precious in God's account, be so in ours. See Prov. iii. 14, &c.

2. The place of it, for that is undiscoverable. *Where shall wisdom be found?* ver. 12. He asks this;

1. As one that truly desired to find it. This is a question we should all put, while the most of men are asking where shall money be found, we should ask where may wisdom be found, that we may seek it and find it. Not vain philosophy, or carnal policy, but true religion; for that is the only true wisdom, that is it which best improves our faculties, and best se-

cures our spiritual and eternal welfare. This is that which we should cry after, and dig for, *Prov. ii. 3, 4.*

2. As one that utterly despaired of finding it any where but in God, and any way but by divine revelation: *It is not found in this land of the living*, ver. 13. We cannot attain to a right understanding of God and his will, of ourselves and our duty and interest by reading any books of men, but God's book, and the men of God. Such is the degeneracy of the human nature, that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those that are born again, and through grace partake of a divine nature. As for others, even the most ingenious and industrious, they can tell us no tidings of this lost wisdom. (1.) Ask the miners, and by them *the depth will say, It is not in me*: ver. 14. Those that dig into the bowels of the earth, to rifle the treasures there, cannot in these dark recesses, find this rare jewel, nor with all their art make themselves masters of it. (2.) Ask the mariners, and by them the sea will say, *It is not in me*: it can never be got either by trading on the waters, or diving into them; can never be *sucked from the abundance of the seas, or the treasures hid in the sand*. Where there is a vein for the silver, there is no vein for wisdom, none for grace. Men can easier break through the difficulties they meet with in getting worldly wealth, than through those they meet with in getting heavenly wisdom: and they will take more pains to learn how to live in this world, than how to live for ever in a better world. So blind and foolish is man become, that it is in vain to ask him, *where is the place of wisdom?* and which is the road that leads to it?

20. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? 21. Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. 22. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. 23. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. 24. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. 25. To make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure. 26. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: 27. Then did he see it, and declare it, he prepared it, yea, and searched it out. 28. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

The same question he had asked, ver. 12. he asks again here, for it is too worthy, too weighty, to be let fall until we speed in the enquiry. Concerning this we must seek until we find, until we get some satisfactory account of it. And by a diligent prosecution of this enquiry, he brings it at length to this issue: that there is a twofold wisdom; one *hid in God*; which is secret, and *belongs not to us*; the other made known by him, and revealed to man, which *belongs to us and our children*.

1. The knowledge of God's *secret will*, the will of his providence, is out of our reach, and what God has reserved to himself. *It belongs to the Lord our God*. To know the particulars of what God will do hereafter, and the reasons of what he is doing now, is the knowledge he first speaks of.

(1.) This knowledge is hid from us: it is high, we cannot attain unto it, ver. 21, 22. *It is hid from the eyes of all living*, even of philosophers, politicians, and saints; it is *kept close from the fowls of the air*, though they fly high and in the open firmament of heaven, though they seem somewhat nearer that upper world where the source of this wisdom is, though their eyes behold afar off, *Job. xxix. 29.* yet they cannot penetrate into the counsels of God: No, man is *wiser than the fowls of the heaven*, and yet comes short of this wisdom. Even those who in their speculations soar highest, and think themselves like the fowls of the air above the heads of other people, yet cannot pretend to this knowledge. Job and his friends had been arguing about the methods and reasons of the dispensations of providence in the government of the world: why, what fools are we (saith Job) to fight the dark thus? to dispute about that which we do not understand? the line and plummet of human reason can never fathom the abyss of the divine counsels. Who can undertake to give a rationale of providence, or account for the maxims, measure and methods of God's government, those *arcana imperii*, the cabinet counsels of divine wisdom? let us then be content not to know the future events of providence until time discover them, *Acts i. 7.* We are not to know the secret reasons of providence until eternity discover them. God is now a God that hideth himself, *Isa. xlv. 15.* *clouds and darkness are round about him*. Though this wisdom be hid from all living, yet *destruction and death say, they have heard thee for it*; though they cannot give an account of it themselves, for there is *no wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge at all in the grave*, much less this; yet there is a world on the other side death and the grave, on which those dark regions border, and to which we must pass through them, and there we shall see clearly what we are now in the dark about. Have a little patience, saith death to the inquisitive soul, I will fetch thee shortly to a place where even this wisdom will be found: *when the mystery of God shall be finished*, it will be laid open, and we shall know how we are known, when the veil of flesh is rent, and the interposing clouds are scattered, we shall know what God doth, though we know not now, *John xiii. 7.*

(2.) This knowledge is hid in God, as the apostle speaks, *Eph. iii. 9.* *Known unto God are all his works*, though they are not known to us, *Acts xv. 18.* There are good reasons for what he doth, though we cannot assign them, ver. 23. *God understands the way thereof*. Men sometimes do they know not what, but God never doth. Men do what they did not design to do; new occurrences put them upon new counsels, and oblige them to take new measures: but God doth all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself, and which he never alters. Men sometimes do that which they cannot give a good reason for, but in every will of God there is a counsel: he knows both what he doth, and why he doth it; the whole series of events, and the order and place of every occurrence. This knowledge he has in perfection, but keeps it to himself.

Two reasons are here given why God must needs understand his own way, and he only.

1. Because all events are now directed by an *all-seeing and almighty providence*, ver. 24, 25. He that governs the world, is, (1.) Omniscient: *for he looks to the ends of the earth*, both in place and time; distant ages, distant regions are under his view: We do not understand our own way, much less can we understand God's way, because we are short-sighted; how little do we know of what is a doing in the world, much less of what will be done? *but the eyes of the Lord are in every place*; nay, they run to and fro through the earth: nothing is or can be hid from him; and therefore the reason why some wicked people prosper remarkably, and others are re-

markably



markedly punished in this world, which are secret to us, are known to him. One day's events and one man's affairs have such a reference to and such a dependence upon another's, that he only to whom all events and all affairs are naked and open, and who sees the whole at one entire and certain view, is a competent judge of every part. (2.) He is omnipotent: He can do every thing, and is very exact in all he doth. For proof of this, he instanceth in the winds and waters, *ver. 25.* What is lighter than the wind? yet God hath ways of poisoning it? he knows how to make the weight for the winds, which he brings out of his treasures, *Psal. cxxxv. 7.* keeping a very particular account of what he draws out, as men do of what they pay out of their treasures, not at random, as men bring out their trash. Nothing sensible is to us more unaccountable than the wind; we hear the sound of it, yet cannot tell whence it comes, or whence it goes: but God gives it out by weight, wisely ordering both from what point it shall blow, and with what strength. The waters of the sea, and the rain waters he both weighs and measures: allotting the proportion of every tide and every shower. A great and constant communication there is between clouds and seas, the waters above the firmament and those under it, vapours go up, rains come down, air is condensed into water, water rarefied into air: but the great God keeps an exact account of all the stock with which this trade is carried on for the public benefit, and see that none of it be lost. Now if in these things providence be so exact, much more in dispensing frowns and favours, rewards and punishments, to the children of men, according to the rules of equity.

2. Because all events were from eternity designed and determined by an infallible prescience and immutable decree, *ver. 26, 27.* When he settled the course of nature, he fore-ordained all the operations of his government.

1. He settled the course of nature; for this he instanceth in a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunder and lightning: the general manner and method, and the particular uses and tendencies of these strange performances, both their causes and their effects, were appointed by the divine purpose; hence he is said to prepare lightnings for the rain, *Psal. cxxxv. 7.* *Jer. x. 13.*

2. When he did that, he laid all the measures of his providence, and drew an exact scheme of the whole work from first to last: then from eternity did he see himself, and declare to himself the plan of his proceedings; then he prepared it, fixed it and established, set every thing in readiness for all his works: so that when any thing was to be done, nothing was to seek, nor could any thing unforeseen occur to put it either out of its method, or out of its time for all was ordered as exactly as if he had studied it, and searched it out; so that whatever he doth, nothing can be put to it, or taken from it, and therefore it shall be for ever, *Eccles. iii. 14.* Some make Job to speak of wisdom here as a person, and translate it, then he saw her, and showed her, &c. and then it is parallel with that of Solomon, concerning the essential wisdom of the Father, the eternal Word, *Prov. viii. 22, &c.* Before the earth was, then was I by him, *John i. 1, 2.*

2. The knowledge of God's revealed will, the will of his precept, and this is within our reach, it is level to our capacity, and will do us good, *ver. 28.* Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. Let it not be said, that when God concealed his counsels from man, and forbid him that tree of knowledge, it was because he grudged him any thing that would contribute to his real bliss and satisfaction; no, he let him know as much as he was concerned to know in order to his duty and happiness; he shall be intrusted with as much of his sovereign mind as was needful and fit for a subject, but he must not think himself fit to be a privy counsellor. He said to Adam, so some, to the first man, in the day in which he was created; he told him plainly, it was not for him to amuse himself with over curious searches into the mysteries of creation, nor pretend to solve all the phenomena of nature; he would find it neither possible nor profitable to do so: No less wisdom (saith Archbishop Tillotson) than that which made the world, can thoroughly understand the philosophy of it: but let him look upon this as his wisdom, to fear the Lord and to depart from evil; let him learn that, and he is learned enough, let this knowledge serve his turn. When God forbid man the tree of knowledge, he allowed him the tree of life, and this is that tree, *Prov. iii. 18.* We cannot attain true wisdom but by divine revelation, the Lord giveth wisdom, *Prov. ii. 6.* Now the matter of that is not the secrets of nature or providence, but the rules of our own practice: unto man he said not, go up to heaven to fetch happiness thence; or go down to the deep to draw it up thence: No, the word is nigh thee, *Deut. xxx. 2.* He hath showed thee, O man, not what is great, but what is good, not what the Lord thy God designs to do with thee, but what he requires of thee, *Micah vi. 8.* Unto you, O men, I call, *Prov. viii. 4.* Lord what is man that he should be thus minded, thus visited! Behold, mark, take notice of this, he that hath ears let him hear what the God of heaven saith to the children of men, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. Here is, (1.) The description of true religion, pure religion, and undefiled: it is to fear the Lord, and depart from evil, which agrees with God's character of Job, *chap. i. 1.* The fear of the Lord is the spring and summary of all religion. There is a slavish fear of God, springing from hard thoughts of him, which is contrary to religion, *Matt. xxv. 24.* There is a selfish fear of God, springing from dreadful thoughts of him, which may be a good step towards religion, *Acts ix. 5.* But there is a filial fear of God, springing from great and high thoughts of him, which is the life and soul of all religion. And wherever this reigns in the heart, it will appear by a constant care to depart from evil, *Prov. xvi. 6.* This is essential to religion, we must first cease to do evil, or we shall never learn to do well. *Virtus est vitium fugere.* (2.) The commendation of religion, it is wisdom and understanding; to be truly religious, is to be truly wise; as the wisdom of God appears in the institution of it; so the wisdom of man appears in the practice and observance of it; it is understanding, for it is the best knowledge of truth; it is wisdom, for it is the best conduct of our affairs; nothing more surely guides our way and gains our end than being religious.

## C. II. A. P. XXIX.

After that excellent discourse concerning wisdom in the foregoing chapter, Job sat down and paused a while, not because he had talked himself out of breath, but because he would not, without the leave of the company, ingross the talk to himself, but would give room for his friends, if they pleased, to make their remarks on what he had said; but they had nothing to say, and therefore after he had recollected himself a little, he went on with his discourse concerning his own affairs, in this and the two following chapters. In which, (1.) He describes the height of the prosperity from which he was fallen. And, (2.) The depth of the adversity into which he was fallen; and this he doth to move the pity of his friends, and to justify, or at least excuse, his own complaints. But then (3.) To obviate his friends censures of him, he makes a very ample and particular protestation of his own integrity notwithstanding. In this chapter he looks back to the days of his prosperity: and shows,

(1.) What comfort and satisfaction he had in his house and family, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) What a great deal of honour and power he had in his country, and what respect was paid him by all sorts of people, *ver. 7—10.* (3.) What abundance of good he did in his place, as a magistrate, *ver. 11—17.* (4.) What a just prospect he had of the continuance of his comforts at home, *ver. 18—20.* And of his interest abroad, *ver. 21—25.* All this he enlarged upon, to aggravate his present calamities; like Naomi, I went out full, but am brought home again empty.

1. **M**OREOVER, Job continued his parable, and said, 2. Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me: 3. When his candle shined upon my head; and when by his light I walked through darkness: 4. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle: 5. When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me: 6. When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil:

Losers may have leave to speak, and there is nothing they speak of more feelingly than of the comforts they are stripped of: Their former prosperity is one of the most pleasing subjects of their thoughts and talk. It was so to Job here, who begins with a wish, *ver. 2.* O that I were as in months past! So he brings in this account of his prosperity. His wish is, (1.) Oh that I were in as good a state as I was then; that I had as much wealth, honour, and pleasure, as I had then! This he wisheth, not so much from a concern he had for his ease as for his reputation, and the glory of his God, which he thought was eclipsed by his present sufferings. O! that I might be restored to my prosperity, and then the censures and reproaches of my friends would be effectually silenced, even upon their own principles, and for ever rolled away. If this be our end in desiring life, health and prosperity, that God may be glorified, and the credit of our holy profession rescued, preserved and advanced, the desire is not only natural but spiritual. (2.) O that I were in as good a frame of spirit, as I was then! That which Job complained most of now, was a load upon his spirits, through God's withdrawing from him; and therefore he wishes he had now his spirit as much enlarged and encouraged in the service of God as he had had then, and that he had as much freedom and fellowship with him, as he then thought himself happy in. This was in the days of his youth, *ver. 4.* when he was in the prime of his time for the enjoyment of those things, and could relish them with the highest gust. Note, Those that prosper in the days of their youth, know not what black and cloudy days they are yet reserved for.

Two things made the months past pleasant to Job.

1. That he had comfort in his God. This was the chief thing he rejoiced in in his prosperity, as the spring of it and the sweetness of it; that he had the favour of God, and the tokens of that favour. He did not attribute his prosperity to a happy turn of fortune, or to his own might, or the power of his own hand, but makes the same acknowledgment that David doth, *Psal. xxx. 7.* Thou, by thy favour, hast made my mountain stand strong. A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world.

Four things were then very pleasant to holy Job.

1. The confidence he had in the divine protection. They were the days when God preserved me, *ver. 2.* Even then he saw himself exposed, and did not make his wealth his strong city, nor trusted in the abundance of his riches, but the name of the Lord was his strong tower, and in that only he thought himself safe, and to that he ascribed it that he was then safe, and his comforts were preserved to him. The devil saw a hedge about him of God's making, *Job i. 10.* And Job saw it himself, and owned it was God's visitation that preserved his spirit, *chap. x. 12.* Those only whom God protects are safe, and may be secure: and therefore those who have never so much of this world, must not think themselves safe unless God preserve them.

(2.) The complacency he had in the divine favour, *ver. 3.* God's candle shined upon his head, i. e. God lifted up the light of his countenance upon him, gave him the assurances and sweet relishes of his love: the best of the communications of the divine favour to the saints in this world, is but candle-light, compared with what is reserved for them in a future state. But such abundant satisfaction did Job take in the divine favour, that by the light of that he walked through darkness; that guided him in his doubts, comforted him in his griefs, bore him up under his burdens, and helped him through all his difficulties. Those that have the brightest sunshine of outward prosperity, must yet expect some moments of darkness; they are sometimes crossed, sometimes at a loss, sometimes melancholy, but they that are interested in the favour of God, and know how to value it, can, by the light of that, walk cheerfully and comfortably through all the darkness of this vale of tears. That puts gladness into the heart, enough to balance all the grievances of this present time.

(3.) The communion he had with the divine word, *ver. 4.* The secret of God was upon my tabernacle, i. e. when God conversed freely with him, as one bosom friend with another: He knew God's mind, and was not in the dark about it, as of late he had been. The secret of the Lord is said to be with them that fear him, for he shows them that in his covenant which others see not, *Psal. xxv. 14.* God communicates his favour and grace to his people, and receives the returns of their devotion in a way secret to the world. Some read it, when the society of God was in my tabernacle; which Rabbi Solomon understands of an assembly of God's people, that used to meet at Job's house for religious worship, in which he presided; this he took a great deal of pleasure in, and the scattering of it was a trouble to him: Or it may be understood of the angels of God pitching their tents about his habitation.

(4.) The assurance he had of the divine presence, *ver. 5.* The Almighty was yet with me. Now he thought God was departed from him, but in those days he was with him, and that was all in all to him. God's presence with a man in his house, though it be but a cottage, makes it both a castle and a palace.

2. That he had comfort in his family, every thing was agreeable there: he had both mouths for his meat, and meat for his mouths; the want of either is a great affliction. (1.) He had a numerous offspring to enjoy his estate: my children were about me. He had many children, enough to compass him round, and they were observant of him, and obsequious to him, they were about him to know what he would have, and wherein they might serve him; it is a comfort to tender parents to see their children about them; Job speaks very feeling of this comfort, now he was deprived of it; he thought it an instance of God's being with him, that his children were about him; and yet we reckon wrong, if when we have lost our children, we cannot comfort ourselves with this, that we have not lost our God. (2.) He had a plentiful estate for the support of this numerous family, *ver. 6.* His



His dairy abounded to that degree, that he might, if he pleased, *wash his steps in butter*; and his olive-yards were so fruitful, beyond expectation, that it seemed as if the *rock poured him out rivers of oil*: he reckons his wealth, not by his silver and gold, which were for hoarding, but by his butter and oil, which were for use: for what is an estate good for, unless we take the good of it ourselves, and do good with it to others?

7. When I went out to the gate, through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street. 8. The young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose and stood up. 9. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. 10. The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. 11. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me: and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: 12. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. 13. The blessing of him that was ready to perish, came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. 14. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. 15. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. 16. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not, I searched out. 17. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.

We have here Job in a post of honour and power; though he had comfort enough in his own house, yet he did not confine himself to that; we are not born for ourselves, but for the public: when any business was to be done in the gate, the place of Judgment, Job went out to it through the city, ver. 7. not in an affectation of pomp, but in an affection to justice. Observe, Judgment was administered in the gate in the street, in the places of concourse to which every man might have a free access; that who would might be a witness to all that was said and done; and that when judgment was given against the guilty, others might hear and fear. Job being a prince, a judge, a magistrate, a man in authority, among the children of the east, we are here told.

1. What a great deal of respect was paid him by all sorts of people, not only for the dignity of his place, but for his personal merit, his eminent prudence, integrity, and good management. (1.) The people honoured him, and stood in awe of him, ver. 8. The gravity and majesty of his looks and mien, and his known strictness in animadverting upon every thing that was evil and indecent, commanded all about him into a due decorum. The young men that could not keep their countenance, or it may be were conscious to themselves of something amiss, hid themselves, and got out of his way; and the aged, though they kept their ground, yet would not keep their seats, they arose and stood up to do obeisance to him; they who expected honour from others, gave honour to him. Virtue and piety challenge respect from all, and ordinarily have it; but they that not only are good, but do good, are worthy of double honour. Modesty becomes those that are young and in subjection, as much as majesty becomes those that are aged and in power. Honour and fear are due to magistrates, and must be rendered to them, Rom. xiii. 7. But if a great and good man was thus revered, how is the great and good God to be feared? (2.) The princes and nobles paid a mighty deference to him, ver. 9, 10. Some think these were inferior magistrates under him, and the respect they paid him was due to his place, as their sovereign and supreme; it should rather seem they were his equals in place, and joined in commission with him, and the peculiar honour they gave him was gained by his extraordinary abilities and services; it was agreed that he excelled them all in quickness of apprehension, soundness of judgment, closeness of application, clearness and copiousness of expression, and therefore he was among his fellows an oracle of law, and counsel, and justice, and what he said all attended to and acquiesced in. When he came into court, especially when he stood up to speak to any business, the princes refrained talking, and the nobles held their peace, that they might the more diligently hearken to what he said, and might be sure to take his meaning. They that had been forward to speak their own thoughts, loved to hear themselves talk, and cared not much what any body else said, yet when it came to Job's turn to speak were as desirous to know his thoughts, as ever they had been to vent their own. They that suspected their own judgment were satisfied in his, and admired with what dexterity he split the hair, and untied the knots which puzzled them, and which they knew not what to make of. When the princes and nobles wrangled among themselves, all agreed to refer the matters in dispute to Job, and to abide by his judgment: happy the men that are blessed with such eminent gifts as these, they have great opportunities of honouring God, and doing good, but have great need to watch against pride; happy the people that are blessed with such eminent men; it is a token for good to them.

2. What a great deal of good he did in his place: he was very serviceable to his country with the power he had; and here we shall see what it was which Job valued himself by in the day of his prosperity: it is natural to men to have some value for themselves, and we may judge something of our own characters, by observing what that is upon which we value ourselves. Job valued himself not by the honour of his family, the great estate he had, his large income, his full table, the many servants he had at his command; the ensigns of his dignity, his equipage and retinue, the splendid entertainments he gave, and the court that was made to him, but by his usefulness. Goodness is God's glory, and it will be ours; be merciful as God is and we are perfect as he is.

1. He valued himself by the interest he had in the esteem, affections and prayers, of sober people; not by the studied panegyrics of the wits and poets, but the natural praises of all about him. All that heard what he said, and saw what he did, how he laid out himself for the public good, with all the authority and tender affection of a father to his country, blessed him, and gave witness to him, ver. 11. Many a good word they said of him, and many a good prayer they put up for him: he did not think it an honour to make every body fear him, Oderint dum metuant; nor to be arbitrary, and to have his own will and way, not caring what people said of him, but, like Mordecai, to be accepted of the multitude of his brethren, Est. x. 5. 3. He did not so much value the applauses of those at a distance, as the attestations of those that were the witnesses of his conduct, that constantly attended him, saw him and heard him, and could speak of their own knowledge; especially theirs who had themselves been the better for him and could speak by their own experience, such was the blessing of him that was ready to perish, ver. 13. and who by Job's means was rescued from

perishing. Let great men, and men of estates thus do good, and they shall have praise of the same: and let those who have good done them, look upon it as a just debt they owe to their protectors and benefactors, to bless them and give witness to them; to use their interest on earth for their honour, and in heaven for their comfort, to praise them and pray for them. Those are ungrateful indeed who grudge these small returns.

2. He valued himself by the care he took of those that were least able to help themselves, the poor and the needy, the widows and fatherless, the blind and lame, who could not be supposed either to merit his favour, or ever to be in a capacity to recompense it. (1.) If the poor were injured or oppressed, they might cry to Job, and if he found the allegations of their petitions true, they had not only his ear and his bowels, but his hand too; he delivered the poor that cried, ver. 12. and would not suffer them to be trampled upon and run down. Nay, ver. 16. he was a father to the poor, not only a judge to protect them, and to see that they were not wronged, but a father to provide for them, and to see that they did not want, to counsel and direct them, and to appear and act for them upon all occasions. It is no disparagement to the son of a prince, to be a father to the poor. (2.) The fatherless that had none to help them, found Job ready to help them, and, if they were in straits, to deliver them. He helped them to make the best of what little they had, helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them, helped them out into the world, helped them into business, helped them to it, and helped them in it: thus should the fatherless be helped. (3.) Those that were ready to perish he saved from perishing, relieving them that were hungry and ready to perish for want, taking care of them that were sick, that were outcasts, that were falsely accused, or in danger of being turned out of their estates unjustly, or upon any other account were ready to perish: and the extremity of their peril as it quickened Job to appear the more vigorously for them, so it made his reasonable kindness the more affecting and the more obliging, and brought their blessings the more abundantly upon him. (4.) The widows that were sighing for grief, and trembling for fear, he made to sing for joy; so carefully did he protect them, and provide for them, and so heartily did he espouse their interest: it is a pleasure to a good man, and should be so to a great man, to give those occasions to rejoice, who are most acquainted with grief. (5.) Those that were upon any account at a loss, Job gave suitable and seasonable relief to, ver. 15. I was eyes to the blind, counselling and advising those for the best that knew not what to do; and feet to the lame, assisting those with money and friends, that knew what they should do, but knew not how to compass it: those we best help whom we help out in that very thing wherein they are defective, and most need help: we may come to be blind or lame ourselves, and therefore should pity and succour those that are so, Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. Heb. xii. 13.

3. He valued himself by the conscience he made of justice and equity in all his proceedings; his friends had unjustly censured him as an oppressor: so far from that (saith he) that I always made it my business to maintain and support right. (1.) He devoted himself to the administration of justice, ver. 14. I put on righteousness and it clothed me, i. e. He had an habitual disposition to execute justice, and put on a fixed resolution to do it. It was the girdle of his loins, Isa. xi. 5. It kept him tight and steady in all his motions: he always appeared in it, as in his clothing, and never without it. They that put on righteousness it will clothe them, it will keep them warm, and be comfortable to themselves; it will keep them safe, and fence them against the injuries of the season, it will adorn them and recommend them to the favour both of God and man. (2.) He took pleasure in it, and as I may say, a holy pride: he looked upon it as his greatest glory to do justice to all, and injury to none. My judgment was a robe and a diadem. Perhaps he did not himself wear a robe and a diadem, he was very indifferent to those ensigns of honour; they were most fond of them that had least intrinsic worth to recommend them; but the settled principles of justice, by which he was governed and did govern, were to him instead of all those ornaments. If a magistrate do the duty of his place, that is an honour to him far beyond his gold or purple, and should be accordingly his delight; and truly if he do not make conscience of his duty, and in some measure answer the end of his elevation, his robe and diadem, his gown and cap, his sword and mace, are but a reproach, like the purple robe and crown of thorns with which the Jews studied to ridicule our Saviour: for as clothes on a dead man will never make him warm, so robes on an ill man will never make him honourable. (3.) He took pains in the business of his place, ver. 16. The cause which I knew not, I searched out. He diligently inquired into the matters of fact, patiently and impartially heard both sides, set every thing in its true light, and cleared it from false colours; he laid all circumstances together, that he might find out the truth, and the merits of every cause, and then, and not until then, gave judgment upon it: he never answered a matter before he heard it, nor did he judge a man to be righteous, however he seemed, for his being first in his own cause, Prov. xviii. 17.

4. He valued himself by the check he gave to the violence of proud and evil men, ver. 17. I brake the jaws of the wicked; he doth not say he broke their necks, he did not take away their lives, but he broke their jaws; he took away their power of doing mischief, he humbled them, mortified them, and curbed their insolence, and so plucked the spoil out of their teeth; delivered the persons and estates of honest men from being made a prey of by them; when they had got the spoil between their teeth, and were greedily swallowing it down, he bravely rescued it, as David did the lamb out of the mouth of the lion, not fearing, though they roared and raged like a lion disappointed of his prey. Good magistrates must thus be a terror and restraint to evil doers, and a protection to the innocent, and in order to this, they have need to arm themselves with zeal and resolution, and an undaunted courage: a Judge upon the bench has as much need to be bold and brave, as a commander in the field.

18. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. 19. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. 20. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. 21. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. 22. After my words they spake not again, and my speech dropped upon them. 23. And they waited for me, as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide, as for the latter rain. 24. If I laughed on them, they believed it not, and the light of my countenance they cast not down. 25. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.

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That which crowned Job's prosperity was the pleasing prospect he had of the continuance of it: though he knew in the general he was liable to trouble, and therefore was not secure, *chap. iii. 26. I was not in safety, neither had I rest*, yet he had no particular occasion for fear, but as much reason as ever any man had, to count upon the lengthening out of his tranquillity.

1. See here what his thoughts were in his prosperity, *ver. 18. Then I said I shall die in my nest*. Having made himself a warm and easy nest, he hoped nothing would disturb him in it, nor move him out of it, until death removed him. He knew he had never stolen any coal from the altar which might fire his nest; he saw no storm arising to shake down his nest, and therefore concluded, that to-morrow shall be as this day; as David, *Psal. xxx. 6. My mountains stands strong, and shall not be moved*. Observe, (1.) In the midst of his prosperity he thought of dying, and the thought was not uneasy to him. He knew, though his nest was high, it did not set him out of the reach of the darts of death. (2.) Yet he flattered himself with vain hopes, (1.) That he should live long, should *multiply his days as the sand*. He means as the sand on the sea-shore: whereas we should rather reckon our days by the sand in the hour glass, which will be run out in a little time. See how apt even good people are to think of death as a thing at a distance, and to put far from them that evil day, which will really be to them a good day. (2.) That he should die in the same prosperous state in which he had lived. If such an expectation as this arise from a lively faith in the providence and promise of God it is well, but if from a conceit of our own wisdom, and the stability of these earthly things, it is ill grounded and turns into sin. We hope Job's confidence was like David's, *Psal. xxvii. 1. Whom shall I fear?* not like the rich fool's, *Luke xii. 19. Soul, take thine ease*.

2. See what was the ground of these thoughts.

1. If he looked at home he found he had a good bottom. His stock was all his own, and none of all his neighbours had a demand upon him: he found no bodily distemper growing upon him, his estate did not lie under any incumbrance, nor was he sensible of any worm at the root of it. He was getting forward in his affairs, and not going behind-hand; he lost no reputation, but gained rather; he knew no rival that threatened either to eclipse his honour, or abridge his power: see how he describes this, *ver. 19, 20. He was like a tree whose root is not only spread out, which fixes it and keeps it firm, so that it is in no danger of being overturned, but spread out by the waters which feed it, and make it fruitful and flourishing, so that it is in no danger of withering. And as he thought himself blessed with the fatness of the earth, so also with the kind influences of heaven too; for the dew lay all night upon his branch; providence favoured him, and made all his enjoyments comfortable, and all his enterprises successful. Let none think to support their prosperity with what they draw from this earth, without that blessing which is derived from above. God's favour being continued to Job, in the virtue of that his glory was still fresh in him: those about him had still something new to say in his praise, and needed not to repeat the old stories; and it is only by constant goodness that men's glory is thus preserved fresh, and kept from withering and growing stale. His bow also was renewed in his hand, i. e. his power to protect himself, and annoy those that assailed him still increased, so that he thought he had as little reason as any man to fear the insults of the Sabaeans and Chaldeans.*

2. If he looked abroad, he found he had a good interest and well confirmed. As he had no reason to dread the power of his enemies, so neither had he any reason to distrust the fidelity of his friends: to the last moment of his prosperity they continued their respects to him, and their dependence on him. What had he to fear who gave counsel, as in effect to give law to all his neighbours? Nothing sure could be done against him, when really nothing was done without him.

1. He was the oracle of his country. He was consulted as an oracle, and his dictates were acquiesced in as oracles, *ver. 21. When others could not be heard, all men gave ear to him, and kept silence at his counsel, knowing as nothing could be said against it, so nothing needed to be added to it. And therefore after his words they spake not again, ver. 22. Why should men meddle with a subject that has already been exhausted?*

2. He was the darling of his country: all about him were well pleased with every thing he said and did, as David's people were with him, *2 Sam. iii. 36. He had the hearts and affections of all his neighbours, all his servants, tenants, subjects; never was man so much admired, nor so well beloved. (1.) They were thought happy to whom he spoke, and they thought themselves so: never were the dews of heaven so acceptable to the parched ground, as his wife discourses were to them that attended on them, especially to whom they were particularly accommodated and directed. His speech dropped upon them, and they waited for it as for the rain, ver. 22, 23. wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, catching at them, laying hold on them, and treasuring them up as apothegms. His servants that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom, would not have envied Solomon's. Those are wise, or are likely to be so, that know how to value wise discourse, that wish for it, and wait for it, and drink it in as the earth doth the rain that comes often upon it, Heb. vi. 7. And those who have such an interest as Job had in the esteem of others, whose *ipse dixit* goes so far, as they have a great opportunity of doing good, so they must take great care lest they do hurt, for an ill word out of their mouths is very infectious. (2.) Much more happy were they thought on whom he smiled, and they thought themselves so, ver. 24. If I laughed on them, designing thereby to shew myself pleased in them, or pleasant with them, it was such a favour that they believed it not for joy, or because it was so rare a thing to see this grave man smile. Many seek the ruler's favour: Job was a ruler whose favour was courted and valued at a high rate. He to whom a great Prince gave a kiss was envied by another to whom he only gave a golden cup. Familiarity often breeds contempt, but if Job at any time saw fit for his own diversion to make himself free with those about him; yet he did not in the least diminish the veneration they had for him: *the light of his countenance they cast not down*. So wisely did he dispense his favours as not to make him cheap, and so wisely did they receive them, as not to make themselves unworthy of them another time.*

3. He was the sovereign of his country, *ver. 25. He chose out their way, sat at the helm, and steered for them, all referring themselves to his conduct, and submitting themselves to his command. To this perhaps in many countries monarchy owed its rise; such a man as Job, that so far excelled all his neighbours in wisdom and integrity, could not but sit chief, and the fool will of course be servant to the wise in heart: and if the wisdom did but for a while run in the blood, the honour and power would certainly attend it, and so by degrees become hereditary. Two things recommended Job to the sovereignty. (1.) That he had the authority of a commander, or general; he dwelt as a king in the army, giving orders which were not to be disputed. Every one that has the spirit of wisdom has not the spirit of government, but Job had both, and when there was occasion, could take on as the king in the army doth, and say, go, come,*

and do this, *Matth. viii. 9. (2.) That yet he had the tenderness of a comforter. He was as ready to succour those in distress, as if it had been his office to comfort the mourners: Eliphaz himself owned he had been very good at that, chap. iv. 3. Thou hast strengthened the weak hands. And this he now reflected upon with pleasure, when he was himself a mourner: but we find it easier to comfort others with the comforts wherewith we ourselves have been formerly comforted, than to comfort ourselves with those comforts wherewith we have formerly comforted others.*

I know not but we may look upon Job as a type and figure of Christ, in his power and prosperity: our Lord Jesus is such a king as Job was: the poor man's king, who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, and upon whom the blessing of a world ready to perish comes; see *Psal. lxxii. 2, &c.* To him therefore let us give ear, and let him sit chief in our hearts.

## C H A P. XXX.

*It is a melancholy But now which this chapter begins with. Adversity is here described as much to the life as prosperity was there, and the height of that did but increase the depth of this: God sets the one over-against the other, and so did Job, that his afflictions might appear the more grievous, and consequently his case the more pitious. (1.) He had lived in great honours, but now he had fallen into disgrace, and was as much vilified, even by the meanest, as ever he had been magnified by the greatest; this he insists much on, ver. 1—14. (2.) He had had much inward comfort and delight, but now he was a terror and burden to himself, ver. 15, 16. and overwhelmed with sorrow, ver. 28—31. (3.) He had long enjoyed a good state of health, but now he was sick and in pain, ver. 17—19—29, 30. (4.) Time was when the secret of God was with him, but now his communication with heaven was cut off, ver. 20—22. (5.) He had promised himself a long life, but now he saw death at the door, ver. 23. One thing he mentions, which aggravated his affliction, that it surprised him when he looked for peace. But two things gave him some relief, (1.) That his troubles would not follow him to the grave, ver. 24. (2.) That his conscience witnessed for him, that in his prosperity he had sympathized with those that were in misery, ver. 25.*

1. **B**UT now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. 2. Yea, whereto might the strength of their hands profit me, in whom old age was perished? 3. For want and famine they were solitary: fleeing into the wilderness, in former time desolate and waste: 4. Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper-roots for their meat. 5. They were driven forth from among men, (they cried after them, as after a thief.) 6. To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. 7. Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together. 8. They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. 9. And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word. 10. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. 11. Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me. 12. Upon my right hand rise the youth, they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction. 13. They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper. 14. They came upon me, as a wide breaking in of waters: in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me.

Here Job makes a very large and sad complaint of the great disgrace he was fallen into, from the height of honour and reputation, which was exceeding grievous and cutting to such an ingenious spirit as Job's was. Two things he insisted upon as very aggravating.

1. The meanness of the persons that affronted him. As it added much to his honour in the day of his prosperity, that princes and nobles shewed him respect, and paid a deference to him, so it added no less to his disgrace in his adversity, that he was kicked by the footmen, and trampled upon by those that were not only every way his inferiors, but were the meanest and most contemptible of all mankind. None can be represented more base than they are here represented, who insulted Job, upon all accounts.

(1.) They were young, younger than he, *ver. 1. the youth, ver. 12. who ought to have behaved themselves respectfully towards him for his age and gravity. Even the children in their play played upon him, as the children of Bethel upon the prophet, go up, thou bald-head. Children soon learn to be scornful when they see their parents so.*

(2.) They were of a mean extraction; their fathers were so very despicable, that such a man as Job would have disdained to take them into the lowest service about his house, as that of tending the sheep, and attending the shepherds with the dogs of his flock, *ver. 1. They were so shabby that they were not fit to be seen among his servants, so silly that they were not to be employed, and so false that they were not fit to be trusted in the meanest post. Job here speaks what he might have done, not what he did: he was not of such a spirit as to set any of the children of men with the dogs of his flock, he knew the dignities of the human nature better than so.*

(3.) They and their families were the unprofitable burdens of the earth, and good for nothing; Job himself with all his prudence and patience could make nothing of them, *ver. 2. The young were not fit for labour they were so lazy, and went about their work so awkwardly: whereto might the strength of their hands profit me?* The old were not to be advised with in the smallest matters, for in them was old age indeed, but their old age was perished, they were twice children.

(4.) They were extreme poor, *ver. 5. they were ready to famish, for they would not dig, and to beg they were ashamed. Had they been brought to necessity by the providence of God, their neighbours would have sought them out as proper objects of charity, and would have relieved them; but being brought into straits by their own slothfulness and wastefulness, nobody was forward to relieve them; but they were forced to flee into the desert.*



deserts both for shelter and sustenance, and were put to sorry shifts indeed, when they cut up mullows by the bushes, and were glad to eat them for want of food that was fit for them, *ver. 4.* See what hunger will bring men to: one half of the world doth not know how the other half lives, yet those that have abundance ought to think sometimes of those whose fare is very coarse, and who are brought to a short allowance of that too; but we must own the righteousness of God, and not think it strange if slothfulness clothes men with rags, and the idle soul be made to suffer hunger. This beggarly world is full of the devil's poor.

(5.) They were very scandalous wicked people, not only the burdens but the plagues of the places where they lived; arrant scoundrels, and the scorn of the country. *They were driven forth from among men, ver. 5.* They were such lying, thieving, lurking, mischievous people; that the best service the magistrates could do, was to rid the country of them, while the very mob cried after them as after a chief: Away with such fellows from the earth, it is not fit they should live. They were lazy and would not work, and therefore they were exclaimed against as thieves, and justly, for they that do not earn their own bread by honest labour, do in effect steal the bread out of other people's mouths: an idle fellow is a public nuisance; but it is better to drive such men into a workhouse, than as here into a wilderness, which will punish them indeed, but never reform them. They were forced to dwell in caves of the earth, and they brayed like asses among the bushes, *ver. 6, 7.* See what is the lot of those that have the cry of the country, the cry of their own conscience, against them, they cannot but be in continual terror and confusion: they groan among the trees, (so Broughton) and smart among the nettles; they are stung and scratched there, where they hoped to be sheltered and protected. See what miseries wicked people bring themselves to in this world, yet this is nothing to what is in reserve for them in the other world.

(6.) They were all that is base, *ver. 8.* They had nothing at all in them to recommend them to any man's esteem: they were a vile kind; yea, a kind without name; people that nobody could give a good word to, nor had a good wish for; they were banished from the earth, being viler than the earth. One would not think it possible, that even the human nature should sink so low, and degenerate so far as it did in these people. When we thank God we are men, we have reason to thank him that we are not such men. But such as these were abusive to Job. (1.) In revenge, because when he was in prosperity and power, like a good magistrate, he put the laws in execution, which were in force against vagabonds and rogues, and sturdy beggars, which these base people now remembered against him. (2.) In triumph over him, because they thought he was now become like one of them. Alluding to *Isa. xiv. 10, 11.* The subjects, men of mean spirits, insult over the miserable, *Psal. xxxv. 15.*

2. The greatness of the affronts that were given him: it cannot be imagined how abusive they were.

(1.) They made ballads on him, with which they made themselves and their companions merry, *ver. 9. I am their song, and their bye-word:* Those have a very base spirit, that turn the calamities of their honest neighbours into a jest, and can sport themselves with their griefs.

(2.) They shunned him as a loathsome spectacle, abhorred him, fled far from him, *ver. 10.* as an ugly monster, or as one infected; that they were themselves driven out from among them, would have driven them out. For,

(3.) They expressed the greatest scorn and indignation against him that could be. They spit in his face, or were ready to do so; they tripped up his heels, pushed away his feet, *ver. 12.* kicked him either in wrath because they hated him, or in sport to make themselves merry with him, as they did with their companions at foot-ball. The best of saints have sometimes received the worst of injuries and indignities from a spiteful, scornful, wicked world, and must not think it strange; our Master himself was thus abused.

(4.) They were very malicious against him, and not only made a jest of him, but made a prey of him; not only affronted him, but set themselves to do him all the real mischief they could devise. *They raise up against me the ways of their destruction;* or, as some read it, *they cast upon me the cause of their woe,* i. e. they lay the blame of being driven out upon me; and it is common for criminals to hate the judges and laws by which they are punished. But under this pretence, (1.) They accused him falsely, and misrepresented his former conversation, which is here called marring his path. They reflected upon him as a tyrant and an oppressor, because he had done justice upon them; and perhaps Job's friends grounded their uncharitable censures of him, *chap. xxii. 6.* &c. upon the unjust and unreasonable clamours of these sorry people; and it was an instance of their great weakness and inconsideration, for who can be innocent if the accusations of such fellows may be heeded? they not only triumphed in his calamity, but set it forward, and did all they could to add to his miseries, and make them more grievous to him. It is a great sin to forward the calamity of any, especially of good people: in this they have no helper, no body to set them on, to countenance them in it; no body to bear them out or to protect them, but they do it of their own accord; they are fools in other things, but wise enough to do mischief; and need no help in inventing that: some read it thus, *they hold my heaviness a profit, though they be never the better.* Wicked people, though they get nothing by the calamities of others, yet rejoice in them.

5. They that did him all this mischief were numerous, unanimous, and violent, *ver. 14.* *They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters,* when the dam is broke; or, they come as soldiers into a broad breach which they have made in the wall of a besieged city, pouring in upon me with the utmost fury; and in this they took a pride and a pleasure, in the desolation they rolled themselves, as a man rolls himself in a soft and easy bed; and they rolled themselves upon him with all the weight of their malice.

Lastly, All this contempt put upon him was caused by the troubles he was in, *ver. 11.* *Because he has loosed my cord;* hath taken away the honour and power with which he was girded, *chap. xii. 13.* hath scattered what I had got together, and untwisted all my affairs; because he hath afflicted me, therefore they have let loose the bridle before me, i. e. have given themselves a liberty to say and do what they please against me. They that by providence are stripped of their honour, may expect to be loaded with contempt by inconsiderate ill-natured people. Because he hath loosed his cord (the original has that reading also) i. e. because he hath taken off his bridle of restraint from off their malice; they cast away the bridle from me, i. e. they make no account of my authority, nor stand in any awe of me. It is owing to the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, and the restraints he lays upon them, that we are not continually thus insulted and abused; and if at any time we meet with such ill treatment, we must acknowledge the hand of God in taking off those restraints; as David did when Shimei cursed him: *So let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.*

Now in all this, (1.) We may see the uncertainty of worldly honour, and particularly of popular applause: how suddenly a man may fall from the height of dignity into the depth of disgrace. What little cause there-

fore have men to be ambitious or proud of that which may be so easily lost, and what little confidence is to be put in it? They that to-day do cry Hosannah, may to-morrow cry, Crucify; but there is an honour which comes from God, which if we secure, we shall find it not thus changeable and loseable. (2.) We may see that it has often been the lot of very wise and good men, to be trampled upon and abused. And, (3.) That those who look only at the things that are seen, despise those whom the world frowns upon, though they are never so much the favourites of heaven: Nothing is more grievous in poverty than that it renders men contemptible: *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam ut semper odit damnatos.* (4.) We may see in Job a type of Christ, who was thus made a *reproach of men,* and *despised of the people,* *Psal. xxii. 6.* *Ira. lii. 3.* and who hid not his face from shame and spitting, but bore it better than Job did.

15. Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud. 16. And now my soul is poured out upon me: the days of affliction have taken hold upon me. 17. My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest. 18. By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat. 19. He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes. 20. I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not. 21. Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me. 22. Thou liftest me up to the wind: thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance. 23. For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. 24. Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction. 25. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? 26. When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light there came darkness. 27. My bowels boiled, and rested not: the days of affliction prevented me. 28. I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation. 29. I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls. 30. My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burnt with heat. 31. My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.

In this second part of Job's complaint, which is very bitter, and has a great many sorrowful accents upon it, we may observe a great deal that he complains of, and some little that he comforts himself with.

1. Here is a great deal that he complains of.

(1.) In general, it was a day of affliction and sorrow.

(1.) Affliction seized him, and surprised him. It seized him, *ver. 16.* *The days of affliction have taken hold upon me;* have caught me, so some; they have arrested me, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, claps him upon the back, and lays him by the heels. When trouble comes with commission, it will take fast hold, and not lose its hold. It surprised him, *ver. 27.* *The days of affliction prevented me,* i. e. they came upon me without giving me any previous warning; I did not expect them, nor made any provision for such an evil day: observe, he reckons his afflictions by days, which will soon be numbered and finished, and are nothing to the ages of eternity, *2 Cor. iv. 17.* (2.) He was in great sorrow by reason of it. His bowels boiled with grief, and rested not, *ver. 27.* The sense of his calamities was continually preying upon his spirits, without any intermission: he went mourning from day to day, always sighing, always weeping, and such a cloud was constantly upon his mind, that he went in effect without the sun, *ver. 28.* He had nothing that he could take any comfort in; he abandoned himself to a perpetual sorrow, as one that, like Jacob, resolved to go to the grave mourning; he walked out of the sun (so some) in dark shady places, as melancholy people use to do. If he went into the congregation, to join with them in solemn worship, instead of standing up calmly to desire their prayers, he stood up and cried aloud, through pain of body or anguish of mind, like one half distracted: if he appeared in public to receive visits, when the fit came upon him, he could not contain himself, nor maintain any thing of a decorum, but stood up and shrieked aloud. Thus he was a brother to dragons and owls, *ver. 29.* both in choosing solitude and retirement, as they do; *Ira. xxxiv. 13.* and in making a fearful hideous noise as they do; his inconsiderate complaints were fitly compared to their inarticulate ones.

2. The terror and trouble that seized his soul was the worst part of his calamity, *ver. 15, 16.* (1.) If he looked forward, he saw every thing frightful before him; if he endeavoured to shake off his terrors, they turned furiously upon him; if he endeavoured to out-run them, they pursued his soul as swiftly and violently as the wind. He complained at first of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, *chap. vi. 4.* And still, which way soever he looked, they turned upon him; which way soever he fled, they pursued him. *My soul.*—Heb. *My principal one.* *My prince's;* for the soul is the principal part of the man; it is our glory; it is every way more excellent than the body, and therefore that which pursues the soul, and threatens that, should be most dreaded. (2.) If he looked back, he saw all the good he had formerly enjoyed removed from him, and nothing left but the bitter remembrance of it; my welfare and prosperity passeth away, as suddenly, swiftly, and irrecoverably as a cloud. (3.) If he looked within, he found his spirit quite sunk, and unable to bear his infirmity, not only wounded, but poured out upon him, *ver. 16.* He was not only weak as water, but in his own apprehension lost as water spilt upon the ground. Compare *Psal. xii. 14.* *My heart is melted like wax.*

(3.) His bodily diseases were very grievous; for, (1.) He was full of pain, piercing pain, pain that went to the bone, to all his bones, *ver. 17.* It was a sword in his bones, which pierced him in the night season, when he should have been refreshed with sleep; his nerves were affected with strong convulsions, his sinews took no rest. By reason of his pain he could take no rest, but sleep departed from his eyes. *His bones were burnt with heat, ver. 30.* He was in a constant fever, which dried up the radicle moisture, and even consumed the marrow in his bones. See how frail our bodies are, which carry in themselves the seeds of our own disease and death. (2.) He was full



of fores. Some that are pained in their bones, yet sleep in a whole skin, but Satan's commission against Job, extending both to his bone and to his flesh, he spared neither. His skin was black upon him, ver. 30. The blood settled, the fores suppurated, and by degrees scabbed over, which made his skin look black. Even his garment had its colour changed with the continual running of his boils, and the soft cloathing he used to wear was now grown so stiff, that all his garments were like his collar, ver. 18. It would be noisome to describe what a condition poor Job was in for want of clean linen and good attendance, and what filthy rags all his clothes were. Some think, that among other diseases Job was ill of a quinsy or swelling in his throat, and that it was it which bound him about like a stiff collar.

Thus was he *cast into the mire*, ver. 19. compared to mire, so some: his body looked more like a heap of dirt than any thing else. Let none be proud of their cloathing, nor proud of their cleanness, they know not but some disease or other may change their garments, and even throw them into the mire, and make them noisome both to themselves and others: *instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink*. Isa. iii. 24. We are but dust and ashes at the best, and our bodies vile bodies; but we are apt to forget it, till God by some fore disease makes us sensibly to feel and own what we are. *I am become already like that dust and ashes into which I must shortly be resolved*: Wherever I go, I carry my grave about with me.

(4.) That which afflicted him most of all was that God seemed to be his enemy, and to fight against him: It was he that cast him into the mire, ver. 19. and seemed to trample on him when he had him there: This cut him to the heart more than any thing else. (1.) That God did not appear for him. He addressed to him, but gained no grant; appealed to him, but gained no sentence; he was very importunate in his applications, but in vain, ver. 20. *I cry unto thee*, as one in earnest, I stand up and cry, as one waiting for an answer, but thou hearest not, thou regardest not, for any thing I can perceive. If our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it strange: Though the seed of Jacob did never seek in vain, yet they have often thought they did, and that God has not only been deaf, but angry at the prayers of his people, *Psal. lxxx. 4.* (2.) That God did appear against him: It is one of the worst words that ever Job spoke, that which he here chargeth upon God, ver. 21. *Thou art become cruel to me*; far be it from the God of mercy and grace, that he should be cruel to any; his compassions fail not, but especially that he should be so to his own children: Job was unjust and ungrateful when he said so of him, but harbouring hard thoughts of God was the sin which did, at this time, most easily beset him. Here (1.) He thought God fought against him, and stirred up his whole strength to ruin him. *With thy strong hand thou opposeth thyself*, or art an adversary against me. He had better thoughts of God, chap. xxiii. 6. when he concluded he would not plead against him with his great power. God has an absolute sovereignty and an irresistible strength, but he never useth either the one or the other for the crushing or oppressing of any. (2.) He thought he insulted over him, ver. 22. *Thou liftest me up to the wind*, as a feather or the chaff which the wind plays with; so unequal a match did Job think himself for omnipotence, and so unable was he to help himself, when he was made to ride, not in triumph but in terror, upon the wings of the wind, and the judgments of God did even dissolve his substance, as a cloud is dissolved, and dispersed by the wind. Man's substance, take him in his best estate, is nothing before the power of God, it is soon dissolved.

(5.) He expected no other now, but that God, by these troubles, would shortly make an end of him. If I be made to ride upon the wind, I can count upon no other but to break my neck shortly; and he speaks as if God had no other design upon him, but that in all his dealings with him, *I know that thou wilt bring me*, with so much the more terror, to death, though I might have been brought thither without all this ado, for it is the house appointed for all living, ver. 23. The grave is a house, a narrow, dark, cold, ill-furnished house, but it will be our residence, where we shall rest and be safe; it is our long home, it is our own home, for it is our mother's lap, and in it we are gathered to our fathers. It is a house appointed for us, by him that has appointed us the bounds of all our habitations. It is appointed for all living. It is the common receptacle, where rich and poor meet, it is appointed for the general rendezvous: we must all be brought thither shortly; it is God that brings us, for the keys of death and the grave are in his hand, and we may all know that sooner or later he will bring us thither; it would be well for us, if we would duly consider it. *The living know that they shall die*; let us, each of us, know it with application.

(6.) There were two things that aggravated his trouble, and made it the less tolerable. (1.) That it was a very great disappointment to his expectation, ver. 26. *When I looked for good*, for more good, or at least the continuance of what I had, then evil came; such uncertain things are all our worldly enjoyments, and such a folly is it to feed ourselves with great expectations from them. They that wait for light from the sparks of their creature comforts, will be wretchedly disappointed, and will make their bed in darkness. (2.) That it was a very great change in his condition, ver. 31. My harp is not only laid by, and hung upon the willow trees, but it is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep. Job, in his prosperity, had taken the timbrel and harp and rejoiced at the sound of the organ, chap. xxi. 12. Notwithstanding his gravity and grace he had found time to be cheerful, but now his tune was altered: Let those therefore that rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not, for they know not how soon their laughter will be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness: Thus we see how much Job complains of: But,

2. Here is something in the midst of all with which he comforts himself, and it is but a little. (1.) He foresees with comfort that death will be the period of all his calamities, ver. 24. Though God now, with a strong hand opposeth himself against him, yet, saith he, he will not stretch out his hand to the grave: The hand of God's wrath would bring him to death, but would not follow him beyond death; his soul would be safe and happy in the world of spirits, his body safe and easy in the dust: Though men cry in his destruction; though when they are a-dying, there is a great deal of agony and outcry, many a sigh and groan, and complaint, yet in the grave they feel nothing, they fear nothing, but all is quiet there; Though in hell, which is called destruction, they cry, yet not in the grave; and I being delivered from the second death, the first to me will be an effectual relief. Therefore he wished he might be hid in the grave, chap. xiv. 13. (2.) He reflects with comfort upon the concern he always had for the calamities of others when he was himself at ease, ver. 25. *Did not I weep for him that was in trouble?* Some think herein he complains of God, thinking it very hard, that he who had shewed mercy to others should not himself find mercy; I would rather take it as a quieting consideration to himself; his conscience witnessed for him, that he had always sympathized with persons in misery, and done what he could to help them, and therefore had reason to expect that at length both God and his friends would pity him. They who mourn with them that mourn, will bear their own sorrows the better, when it comes to their turn to drink of the bitter cup. *Did not my soul burn for the poor?* So some read it, comparing it with that of St. Paul,

2 Cor. xi. 29. *Who is offended, and I burn not?* As they who have been unmerciful and hard-hearted to others, may expect to hear of it from their own consciences when they are themselves in trouble: so they who have considered the poor and succoured them, the remembrance of that will make their bed easy in their sickness, *Psal. xii. 1-3.*

## C H A P. XXXI.

Job had often protested his integrity in general, here he doth it in particular instances; not in a way of commendation, for he doth not here proclaim his good deeds; but in his own just and necessary vindication, to clear himself from those crimes with which his friends had falsely charged him, which is a debt every man owes to his own reputation. Job's friends had been particular in their articles of impeachment against him, therefore he is so in his protestation, which seems to refer especially to what Eliphaz had accused him of, chap. xxii. 6, &c. They had produced no witnesses against him, neither could they prove the things whereof they now accused him, and therefore he may well be admitted to purge himself upon oath, which he doth very solemnly, and with many awful imprecations of God's wrath, if he were guilty of those crimes; this protestation confirms God's character of him, that there was none like him in the earth; perhaps some of his accusers durst not have joined with him; for he not only acquits himself of those gross sins which lie open to the eye of the world, but from many secret sins which, though he had been guilty of them, nobody could have charged him with, because he will prove himself no hypocrite. Nor doth he only maintain the cleanness of his practices, but shews also that in them he went upon good principles; that the reason of his eschewing evil was because he feared God, and his piety was at the bottom of his justice and charity; and this crowns the proof of his sincerity. The sins from which he here acquits himself are, (1.) Wantonness and uncleanness of heart, ver. 1-4. (2.) Fraud and injustice in commerce, ver. 4-8. (3.) Adultery, ver. 9-12. (4.) Haughtiness and severity towards his servants, ver. 13-15. (5.) Unmercifulness to the poor, the widows and the fatherless, ver. 16-23. (6.) Confidence in his worldly wealth, ver. 24, 25. (7.) Idolatry, ver. 26-28. (8.) Revenge, ver. 29-31. (9.) Neglect of poor strangers, ver. 32. (10.) Hypocrisy in concealing his own sins, and cowardness in conniving at the sins of others, ver. 33, 34. (11.) From oppression, and the violent invasion of other people's rights, ver. 38-40. And towards the close he appeals to God's judgment concerning his integrity, ver. 35-37. Now in all this we may see, (1.) The sense of the patriarchal age concerning good and evil, and what was so long ago condemned as sinful; that it is both hateful and hurtful. (2.) A noble pattern of piety and virtue proposed to us for our imitation, which if our consciences can witness for us that we conform to it, will be our rejoicing, as it was Job's in the day of evil.

1. **I** Made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? 2. For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high? 3. Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? 4. Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? 5. If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit? 6. Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity. 7. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands: 8. Then let me sow, and let another eat: yea, let my offspring be rooted out.

The lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world, are the too fatal rocks on which multitudes split; against these Job protests he was always careful to stand upon his guard.

1. Against the lusts of the flesh. He not only kept himself clear from adultery, from defiling his neighbours wives, ver. 9. but from all lewdness with any woman whatsoever: He kept no concubine, no mistress, but was inviolably faithful to the marriage-bed, though his wife was none of the wisest, best, or kindest. From the beginning it was so, that a man should have but one wife, and cleave to her only; and Job kept close to that institution, and abhorred the thought of transgressing it; for though his greatness might tempt him to it, his goodness kept him from it. Job was now in pain and sickness of body, and under that affliction it is in a particular manner comfortable, if our consciences can witness for us, that we have been careful to preserve our bodies in chastity, and to possess those vessels in sanctification and honour, pure from the lusts of uncleanness. Now observe here,

1. What the resolutions were which in this matter he kept to, ver. 1. *I made a covenant with mine eyes*, i. e. I watched against the occasions of the sin, why then should I think upon a maid? i. e. by that means, through the grace of God, I kept myself from the very first step towards it. So far was he from wanton dalliances, or any act of lasciviousness, that (1.) He would not so much as admit a wanton look: *He made a covenant with his eyes*, made this bargain with them, that he would allow them the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun, and the glory of God shining in the visible creation, provided they would never fasten upon any object that might occasion any impure imaginations, much less any impure desires in his mind; and under this penalty, that if they did they must smart for it in penitential tears. Note, Those that would keep their hearts pure must guard their eyes, which are both the outlets and inlets of uncleanness: Hence we read of wanton eyes, *Isa. iii. 16.* and eyes full of adultery, 2 Pet. ii. 14. The first sin began in the eye, *Gen. iii. 6.* What we must not meddle with, we must not lust after; and what we must not lust after, we must not look at, not the forbidden wealth, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* Not the forbidden wine, *Prov. xxiii. 31.* Not the forbidden woman, *Matt. v. 28.* (2.) He would not so much as allow a wanton thought: *Why then should I think upon a maid*, with any unchaste fancy or desire towards her? Shame and sense of honour might restrain him from soliciting the chastity of a beautiful virgin, but only grace and the fear of God would restrain him from so much as thinking of it. Those are not chaste that are not so in spirit as well as body, 1 Cor. vii. 34. See how agreeable Christ's exposition of the seventh commandment is with the ancient sense of it, and how much better Job understood it than the Pharisees, though they sat in Moses's chair.

2. What the reasons were which in this matter he was governed by. It was not for fear of reproach among men, though that is to be considered, *Prov. vi. 33.* but for fear of the wrath and curse of God. He knew very well, (1.) That uncleanness is a sin that forfeits all good, and shuts us out from



from the hope of it, *ver. 2.* *What portion of God is there from above?* What blessing can such impure sinners expect from the pure and holy God, or what token of his favour? What inheritance of the Almighty can they look for from on high? There is no portion, no inheritance, no true happiness for a soul, but what is in God, in the Almighty, and what comes from above, from on high: but those that wallow in uncleanness render themselves utterly unfit for communion with God, either in grace here or in glory hereafter, and become allied to unclean spirits, which are for ever separated from him, and then what portion, what inheritance can they have with God? No unclean thing shall enter into the new Jerusalem; that holy city.

(2.) It is a sin that incurs divine vengeance, *ver. 3.* It will certainly be the sinner's ruin if it be not repented of in time. Is not destruction a swift and sure destruction to those wicked people, and a strange punishment to the workers of this iniquity? Fools make a mock at this sin, make a jest of it; it is with them a peccadillo, a trick of youth, but they deceive themselves with vain words, for because of these things, how light soever they make of them, the wrath of God, the insupportable wrath of the eternal God, comes upon the children of disobedience, *Eph. v. 6.* There are some sinners whom God sometimes goes out of the common road of providence to meet with; such are these: The destruction of Sodom is a strange punishment. Is the alienation (so some read it) to the workers of iniquity. This is the sinfulness of the sin that alienates the mind from God, *Eph. iv. 18, 19.* and this is the punishment of sinners, that they shall be eternally set at a distance from him, *Rev. xxiii. 15.*

(3.) It cannot be hid from the all-seeing God. A wanton thought cannot be so close, nor a wanton look so quick as to escape his cognisance, much less any act of uncleanness so secretly done as to be out of his sight. If Job was at any time tempted to this sin, he restrained himself from it, and all approaches to it with this pertinent thought, *ver. 4.* *Doth not he see my ways?* as Joseph did, *Gen. xxxix. 9.* *How can I do it and sin against God?* Two things Job had an eye to. (1.) God's omniscience: It is a great truth, that God's eyes are upon all the ways of men, *Prov. v. 20, 21.* but Job here mentions it with application to himself and his own actions; *Doth he not see my ways?* O God thou hast searched me and known me. God sees what rule we walk by, what company we walk with, what end we walk towards, and therefore what ways we walk in. (2.) His observance. He doth not only see but takes notice; he counts all my steps, all my false steps in the way of duty, all my by-steps into the way of sin. He not only sees our ways in general, but takes cognisance of our particular steps in these ways, every action, every motion: He keeps count of all, because he will call us to account, will bring every work into judgment. God takes a more exact notice of us than we do of ourselves, for whoever counted his own steps? Yet God doth, let us therefore walk circumspectly.

2. He stood upon his guard against the love of the world, and carefully avoided all sinful indirect means of getting wealth. He dreaded all forbidden profit as much as all forbidden pleasure. Let us see,

1. What his protestation is: that he had been honest and just in all his dealings, and never to his knowledge did any body any wrong. (1.) He never walked with craft, *i. e.* he never durst tell a lie to get a good bargain. It was never his way to banter or equivocate, or make many words in his dealings: Some men's constant walk is a constant cheat: They either make what they have more than it is, that they may be trusted; or less than it is, that nothing may be expected from them. But Job was none of those: His wealth was not gotten by vanity, though now diminished, *Prov. xiii. 11.* (2.) He never lusted to deceit. Those that deceive must be quick and sharp, but Job's quickness and sharpness was never turned that way: He never made haste to be rich by deceit; but always acted cautiously, lest through inconsideration he should do an unjust thing. Note, What we have in the world, may be either used with comfort, or lost with comfort, if it was honestly got. (3.) His steps never turned out of the way, the way of justice and fair dealing, from that he never deviated, *ver. 7.* He not only took care not to walk in a constant course and way of deceit, but he did not so much as take one step out of the way of honesty. In every particular action and affair, we must closely tie ourselves up to the rules of righteousness. (4.) His heart did not walk after his eyes, *i. e.* he did not covet what he saw that was another's, nor wish it his own. Covetousness is called the lust of the eye, *1 John ii. 16.* Achan saw, and then took the accursed thing. That heart must needs wander that walks after the eyes; for then it looks no further than the things that are seen; whereas it ought to be in heaven, whither the eyes cannot reach: It should follow the dictates of religion and right reason: If it follow the eye, it will be misled to that which God will bring men into judgment, *Eccles. xi. 9.* (4.) That no blot had cleaved to his hands, *i. e.* he was not chargeable with getting any thing dishonestly, or keeping that which was another's, whenever it appeared to be so. Injustice is a blot, a blot to the estate, a blot to the owner; it spoils the beauty of both, and therefore is to be dreaded. Those that deal much in the world may perhaps have a blot come upon their hands, but they must wash it off again by repentance and restitution, and not let it cleave to their hands. See *Isa. xxxiii. 15.*

2. How he ratifies his protestation. So confident is he of his own honesty, that (1.) He is willing to have his goods searched, *ver. 6.* *Let me be weighed in an even balance, i. e.* Let what I have got be enquired into, and it will be found to weigh well; a sign it was gotten by vanity, for then Tekel had been written on it, weighed in the balance, and found too light. An honest man is so far from dreading a trial, that he desires it rather, being well assured that God doth know his integrity and will approve it, and the trial of it would be to his praise and honour. (2.) He is willing to forfeit the whole cargo, if there be found among them any prohibited contraband goods, any thing but what he came honestly by, *ver. 8.* *Let me sow, and let another eat,* which was already agreed to be the doom of oppressors, *chap. v. 5.—xviii. 2.* and let my offspring, all the trees that I have planted, be rooted out. This intimates, that he believed the sin did deserve this punishment, that ordinarily it is thus punished: But that though now his estate was ruined, and then if ever his conscience would have brought it to his mind, yet he knew himself innocent, that he would venture all the poor remains of his estate upon the issue of the trial.

9. If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door: 10. Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. 11. For this is an heinous crime, yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. 12. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase. 13. If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me: 14. What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer

him? 15. Did not he that made me in the womb, make me, and did not one fashion us in the womb?

Two more instances we have of Job's integrity.

1. That he had a very great abhorrence of the sin of adultery. As he did not wrong his own marriage-bed, by keeping a concubine, he did not so much as think upon a maid, *ver. 2.* so he was careful not to offer any injury to his neighbour's marriage-bed.

Let us see here,

1. How clear he was from this sin, *ver. 9.* (1.) He did not so much as covet his neighbour's wife, for even his heart was not deceived by a woman: The beauty of another man's wife did not kindle in him any unchaste desires, nor was he ever moved by the allurements of an adulterous woman, such as is described, *Prov. vii. 6, &c.* Set the original of all the defilements of this life, they come from a deceived heart. Every sin is deceitful, and none more so than the sin of uncleanness. (2.) He never compassed or imagined any unchaste design: he never laid wait at his neighbour's door to get an opportunity to debauch his wife in his absence, when the good man was not at home, *Prov. vii. 19.* See *chap. xxiv. 15.*

2. What a dread he had of this sin, and what frightful apprehensions he had concerning the malignity of it. That it is a heinous crime, *ver. 11.* one of the greatest vilest sins that a man can be guilty of, highly provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the soul: And concerning the mischievousness of it, and the punishment it deserved, he owns, that if he were guilty of that heinous crime, (1.) His family might justly be made infamous in the highest degree, *ver. 10.* *Let my wife grind to another.* Let her be a slave, to some; a harlot, to others. God often punisheth the sins of one with the sin of another, the adultery of the husband with the adultery of the wife, as in David's case, *2 Sam. xii. 11.* which doth not in the least excuse the treachery of the adulterous wife, but how unrighteous soever she is, God is righteous. See *Hos. iv. 12.* *Your spouses shall commit adultery.* Note, Those who are not just and faithful to their relations, must not think it strange if their relations be unjust and unfaithful to them. (2.) He himself might justly be made a public example: For it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges; yea, though they who be guilty of it are themselves judges, as Job was. Note, Adultery is a crime which the civil magistrate ought to take cognisance of, and punish: So it was adjudged in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses made it capital. It is an evil work, to which the sword of justice ought to be a terror. (3.) It might justly become the ruin of his estate; nay, he knew it would be so, *ver. 12.* *It is a fire.* Lust is a fire in the soul: They that indulge it are sure to burn. It consumes all that is good there, the convictions, the comforts, and lays the conscience waste. It kindles the fire of God's wrath, which if not extinguished by the blood of Christ, will burn to the lowest hell; it will consume even to that eternal destruction: it consumes the body, *Prov. v. 11.* consumes the substance, it roots out all the increase. Burning lusts bring burning judgments. Perhaps it alludes to the burning of Sodom, which was intended for an example to those who should afterwards in like manner live ungodly.

2. That he had a very great tenderness for his servants, and ruled them with a gentle hand. He had a great household, and he managed it well. By this he evidenced his sincerity, that he had grace to govern his passion as well as his appetite, and he that in these two things hath the rule of his own spirit, is better than the mighty, *Prov. xvi. 32.* Here observe,

1. What were Job's condescensions to his servants, *ver. 13.* He did not despise the cause of his man-servant, nor of his maid-servant, when they contended with him, *i. e.* If they contradicted him in any thing, he was willing to hear their reasons: If they had offended him, or were accused to him, he would patiently hear what they had to say for themselves, in their own vindication or excuse. Nay, if they complained of any hardship he put upon them, he did not brow-beat them, and bid them hold their tongues, but gave them leave to tell their story, and redressed their grievances as far as it appeared they had right on their side. He was tender of them, not only when they served and pleased him, but even when they contended with him. Herein was a great example to masters to give unto their servants that which is just and equal; nay, to do the same things to them that they expect from them, *Col. iv. 1.* *Eph. vi. 9.* and not to rule them with rigour, and carry it with a high hand. Many of Job's servants were slain in his service, *chap. i. 15, 16, 17.* the rest were unkind and ungrateful to him, and despised his cause, though he never despised theirs, *chap. xix. 15, 16.* but he had this comfort, that in his prosperity he had carried it well towards them. Note, When relations are either removed from us, or embittered to us, the testimony of our consciences, that we have done our duty to them, will be a great support and comfort to us.

2. What were the considerations that moved him to treat his servants thus kindly; he had herein an eye to God, both as his Judge and as their Maker. (1.) As his Judge; he considered, if I should be imperious and severe with my servants, what then shall I do when God riseth up? He considered that he had a Master in heaven, to whom he was accountable, who will rise up and will visit, and we are concerned to consider what we shall do in the day of his visitation, *Isa. x. 3.* And in consideration of this, that we are undone if God should then be strict and severe with us, we ought to be very mild and gentle towards all with whom we have to do. Consider what would become of us, if God should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, should take all advantageous against us, and insist upon all his just demands from us: If he should visit every offence, and take every forfeiture; if he should always chide, and keep his anger for ever. And let us not be thus rigorous with our inferiors. Consider what will become of us, if we be cruel and unmerciful to our brethren. The cries of the injured will be heard, the sin of the injurious will be punished, they that shewed no mercy shall find none, and what shall we do then?

(2.) As his and his servants Creator, *ver. 15.* when he was tempted to be harsh with his servants, to deny them right, and turn a deaf ear to their reasonings, this thought came very seasonable into his mind, *Did not he that made one in the womb make him?* I am a creature as well as he, and my being is derived and depending as well as his. He partakes of the same nature that I do, and is the work of the same hand: Have we not all one Father? Note, Whatever there is among men in their outward condition, in their capacity of mind or strength of body or place in the world, he that made the one made the other also; which is a good reason why we should not mock at men's natural infirmities, nor trample upon those that are any way our inferiors, but in every thing do as they would be done by. It is a rule of justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*, and therefore since there is so great a parity among men, they being all made of the same mould, by the same power, for the same end, notwithstanding the disparity of our outward condition, we are bound so far to set ourselves upon the level with those we deal with, as to do to them in all respects as we would they should do to us.

16. If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail: 17. Or have eaten



eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof: 18. (For from my youth he was brought up with me as with a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb.) 19. If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering: 20. If his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep: 21. If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: 22. Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone: 23. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

Eliphaz had particularly charged Job with unmercifulness to the poor, chap. xxii. 6, &c. Thou hast withholden bread from the hungry, stripped the naked of their clothing, and sent widows away empty. Now one would think he could not have been so very positive and express in his charge, but there had been some truth in it, some ground for it, and yet it appears by Job's protestation, it was utterly false and groundless, he was never guilty of any such thing. See here,

1. The testimony which Job's conscience gave in concerning his constant carriage towards the poor. He is most large upon this head because in this matter he was most particularly accused. He solemnly protests, (1.) That he had never been wanting to do good to them as there was occasion, to the utmost of his ability. He was always compassionate to the poor and careful of them; especially the widows and fatherless, that were destitute of help: (1.) He was always ready to grant their desires, and answer their expectations, ver. 16. If a poor body begged a kindness of him, he was ready to gratify him; if he could but perceive by the widow's mournful craving look, that she expected an alms from him, though she had not confidence enough to ask it, he had compassion enough to give it, and never caused the eyes of the widow to fail. (2.) He put a respect upon the poor; and did them honour; for he took the fatherless children to eat with him at his own table, they should sit as he sired; and be familiar with him, and he would shew himself pleased with their company, as if they had been his own, ver. 17. As it is one of the greatest grievances of poverty, that it exposeth to contempt, so it is none of the least supports to the poor to be respected. (3.) He was very tender of them, and had a fatherly concern for them, ver. 18. He was a father to the fatherless, took care of orphans, brought them up with him under his own eye, and gave them not only maintenance but education. He was a guide to the widow, who lost the guide of her youth; he advised her in her affairs, took cognizance of them, and undertook the management of them. Those that need not our alms, may yet have occasion for our counsel, and it may be a real kindness to them. This Job said he did from his youth, from his mother's womb, i. e. he had something of tenderness and compassion woven in his nature: He began betimes to do good ever since he could remember, he had always some poor widow or fatherless child under his care. His parents taught him betimes to pity and relieve the poor, and brought up orphans with him. (4.) He provided food convenient for them; they eat of the same morsels that he did, ver. 17. did not only eat after him of the crumbs that fell from his table, but eat with him of the best dish upon his table. They that have abundance must not eat their morsels alone, as if they had none but themselves to take care of, nor indulge their appetite with a dainty bit by themselves, but take others to share with them, as David took Mephibosheth. (5.) He took particular care to clothe them that were without covering, which would be more expensive to him than feeding them, ver. 19. Poor people may perish for want of clothing, as well as for want of food, for want of clothing to lie in by night, or to go abroad in by day. If Job knew of any that were in this distress, he was forward to relieve them, and instead of giving rich and gaudy liveries to his servants, while the poor were turned off with rags that were ready to be thrown to the dunghill, he had good warm strong clothes made on purpose for them, of the fleece of his sheep, ver. 20. so that their loins, whenever they girt those garments about them, blessed him; they commended his charity, blessed God for him, and prayed God to bless him. Job's sheep were burned with fire from heaven, but this was his comfort, that when he had them he came honestly by them, and used them charitably, fed the poor with their flesh, and clothed them with their wool.

2. That he had never been accessory to the wronging of any that were poor. It might be said, perhaps he was kind here and there to a poor orphan that was a favourite, but to others he was oppressive: No, he was tender to all, and injurious to none: He never so much as lifted up his hand against the fatherless, ver. 21. never threatened or frightened them, or offered to strike them; never used his power to crush them that stood in his way, or squeeze what he could out of them. Though he saw his help in the gate, i. e. though he had interest enough both in the people and in the judges, both to enable him to do it, and to bear him out when he had done it. Those that have it in their power to do an ill thing, and go through with it, and a prospect of getting by it, and yet do justly, and love mercy, and are firm to both, may afterwards reflect upon it with a great deal of comfort, as Job doth here.

3. The imprecation wherewith he confirms this protestation, ver. 22. If I have been oppressive to the poor, let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone, i. e. let the flesh rot off from the bone, and be one bone disjoined and broken off from another. Had he not been perfectly clear in this matter, he durst not thus have challenged the divine vengeance: And he intimates, that it is a righteous thing with God to break the arm that is lifted up against the fatherless, as he withered Jeroboam's arm that was stretched out against a prophet.

3. The principles by which Job was restrained from all uncharitableness and unmercifulness. He durst not abuse the poor: for though with his help in the gate, he could overpower them, yet he could not make his part good against that God who is the patron of oppressed poverty, and will not let oppressors go unpunished, ver. 23. Destruction from God was a terror to me whenever I was tempted to this sin, and by reason of his highness I could not endure the thought of making him mine enemy. He stood in awe, (1.) Of the majesty of God, as a God above him: He thought of his highness, the infinite distance between him and God, which possessed him with such a reverence of him as made him very circumspect in his whole conversation. They who oppress the poor and pervert judgment and justice, forget that he who is higher than the highest regardeth, and there is a higher than they, who is able to deal with them, Eccles. v. 8. but Job considered this. (2.) Of the wrath of God, as a God that would certainly be against him, if he should wrong the poor. Destruction from God, because it would be a certain and an utter ruin to him, if he were guilty of this sin, was a constant terror to him, to restrain him from it. Note, good men, even the best,

have need to restrain themselves from sin with the fear of destruction from God, and all little enough: This should especially restrain us from all acts of injustice and oppression; that God himself is the avenger thereof: Even then when salvation from God is a comfort to us, yet destruction from God should be a terror to us. Adam in innocency was awed with a threatening.

24. If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence: 25. If I rejoiced because my wealth was great; and because mine hand had gotten much: 26. If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness: 27. And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: 28. This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above. 29. If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him: 30. (Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.) 31. If the men of my tabernacle said not, O that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied. 32. The stranger did not lodge in the street: but I opened my doors to the traveller.

Four articles more of Job's protestations we have in these verses, which, as all the rest, not only assure us what he was and did, but teach us what we should be and do.

1. He protests that he never set his heart upon the wealth of this world, nor took the things of it for his portion and happiness. He had gold, he had fine gold, his wealth was great, and he had gotten much: Now our wealth is either advantageous or pernicious to us, according as we stand affected to it: If we make it our rest and our ruler, it will be our ruin; if we make it our servant and, an instrument of righteousness, it will be a blessing to us. Job here tells how he stood affected to his worldly wealth, (1.) He put no great confidence in it: He did not make gold his hope, ver. 24. They are very unwise that do, and enemies to themselves, who depend upon it as sufficient to make them happy, who think themselves safe and honourable, and sure of comfort in having abundance of this world's goods. Some make it their hope and confidence for another world, as if it were a certain token of God's favour: And those who have so much sense as not to think so, yet promise themselves that it will be a portion for them in this life, whereas the things themselves are uncertain, and our satisfaction in them much more so. It is hard to have riches and not to trust in riches, and that is it which makes it so difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, Matt. xix. 23: Mark x. 24. 2. He took no great complacency in it, ver. 25. If I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and boasted that my hand had got much. He took no pride in his wealth, as if it added anything to his real excellency, nor did he think that his might and the power of his hand got it him, Deut. viii. 17. He took no pleasure in it, in comparison with the spiritual things which were the delight of his soul. His joy did not terminate in the gift, but pass through it to the giver. When he was in the midst of his abundance, he never said, *Now I take mine ease* in these things, eat, drink, and be merry, nor blessed himself in his riches. He did not inordinately rejoice in his wealth, and that helped him to bear the loss of it so patiently as he did. The way to weep as though he wept not, is to rejoice as though he rejoiced not. The less pleasure the enjoyment is, the less pain the disappointment will be.

2. He protests that he never gave that worship and glory to the creature which is due to God only: He was never guilty of idolatry, ver. 26, 27, 28. We do not find that Job's friends charged him with this. But there were those it seems at that time, who were so foolish as to worship the sun and moon, else Job would not have mentioned it. Idolatry is one of the old ways which wicked men have trodden, and the most ancient idolatry was the worshipping the sun and moon, to which the temptation was most strong, as appears, Deut. iv. 19. where Moses speaks of the danger which the people were in of being driven to worship them: but as yet it was practised secretly, and durst not appear in open view, as afterwards the most abominable idolatries did. Observe,

(1.) How far Job kept from this sin. He not only never bowed the knee to Bael, (which some think was designed to represent the sun) never fell down and worshipped the sun, but he kept his eye, his heart, and his lips clear from this sin. (1.) He never so much as beheld the sun or the moon in their pomp and lustre, with any other admiration of them, than what led him to give all the glory of their brightness and usefulness to their Creator. Against spiritual as well as corporal idolatry he made a covenant with his eyes, and this was his covenant, that whenever he looked at the lights of heaven, he should by faith look through them and beyond them to the Father of lights. (2.) He kept his heart with all diligence, that he should not be secretly enticed to think that there is a divine glory in their brightness, or a divine power in their influence, and that therefore divine honours are to be paid to them. Here is the source of idolatry; it begins in the heart: every man is tempted to that, as to other sins, when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. (3.) He did not so much as put a compliment upon these pretended deities, did not perform the least and lowest act of adoration to them: His mouth did not kiss his hand, which, it is likely, was a ceremony then commonly used, even by some that yet would not be thought idolaters: it is an old, fashioned piece of civil respect among ourselves, in making a bow, to kiss the hand; and it seems was anciently used in giving divine honours to the sun and moon: They could not reach to kiss them, as the men that sacrificed the calves, Hos. xiii. 2. 1 Kings xix. 18. but to shew their good will they kissed their hand, reverencing those as their masters, which God has made servants to this lower world, to hold the candle for us; Job never did it.

(2.) How ill Job thought of this sin, ver. 28. (1.) He looked upon it as an affront to the civil magistrate: It were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, as a public nuisance, and hurtful to kings and provinces. Idolatry debauches men's minds, corrupts their manners, takes off the true sense of religion, which is the great bond of societies, and provokes God to give men up to a reprobate sense, and to send judgments upon a nation, and therefore the conservators of the public peace are concerned to restrain it by punishing it. (2.) He looked upon it as a much greater affront to the God of heaven, and no less than high treason against his crown and dignity; for I should have denied the God that is above, denied his being as God, and his sovereignty as God above. Idolatry is atheism in effect; hence the Gentiles are said to be without God (athiests) in the world. Note, We should be afraid of every thing that doth but implicitly deny the God above, his providence, or any of his perfections.

3. He protests, that he was so far from doing or designing mischief to any,



any, that he neither desired nor delighted in the hurt of the worst enemy he had. The forgiving of those that do us evil, it seems was Old Testament duty. Look how the Pharisees came to lose it, who taught, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy*, Matt. v. 43. Observe here,

1. Job was far from revenge. He did not only not return the injuries that were done him, not only not destroy those that hated him; but (1.) He did not so much as rejoice when any mischief befel them; *ver. 29*. Many that would not wilfully hurt those who stand in their light, or have done them a kindness, yet are secretly pleased, and laugh in their sleeve (as we say) when hurt is done them: But Job was not of that spirit. Though Job was a very good man, yet it seems there were those that hated him, but evil found them. He saw their destruction, and was far from rejoicing in it, for that would justly have brought the destruction upon him, as it is intimated, *Prov. xxiv. 17, 18*. (2.) He did not so much as wish in his own mind that evil might befall them, *ver. 30*. He never wished a curse to his soul; and curses to the soul are the worst of curses; never desired his death; he knew if he did, it would turn into sin to him. He was careful not to offend with his tongue, *Psalm xxxix. 1*. would not suffer his mouth to sin, and therefore durst not imprecate any evil, no not to his worst enemy. If others bear malice to us, that will not justify us in bearing malice to them.

2. He was violently urged to revenge, and yet he kept himself thus clear from it, *ver. 31*. The men of his tabernacle, his domestics, his servants, and those about him, were so enraged at Job's enemy that hated him, that they could have eaten him, if Job would but have set them on, or given them leave. *O that we had of his flesh*. Our master is satisfied to forgive him, but we cannot be so satisfied. See how well beloved Job was by his family, how heartily they espoused his cause, and what enemies they were to his enemies: but see what a strict hand Job kept upon his passions, that he would not revenge himself, though he had those about him that blew the coals of his resentment. Note, A good man commonly doth not lay the affronts that are done him so much to heart himself, as his friends do for him. 2. Great men have commonly those about them that stir them up to revenge. David had so, *1 Sam. xxiv. 4*.—*xxvi. 8*. *2 Sam. xvi. 9*. But if they keep their temper, notwithstanding the spiteful insinuations of those about them, afterward it shall be no grief of heart to them, but shall turn very much to their praise.

4. He protests that he had never been unkind or inhospitable to strangers, *ver. 32*. The stranger lodged not in the street, as angels might lately have done in the streets of Sodom, if Lot alone had not entertained them: Perhaps by that instance Job was taught (as we are, *Heb. xiii. 2*) not to be forgetful to entertain strangers. He that is at home, must consider those that are from home, and put his soul into their soul's stead, and then do as he would be done by. Hospitality is a Christian duty, *1 Pet. iv. 9*. Job in his prosperity was noted for good house-keeping: He opened his door to the road. So it may be read, he kept the street door open, that he might see who passed by, and invited them in, as Abraham, *Gen. xviii. 1*.

33. If I covered my transgressions, as Adam: by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom: 32. Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me; that I kept silence, and went not out of the door? 35. O that one would hear me! behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book. 36. Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me. 37. I would declare unto him the number of my steps, as a prince, would I go near unto him. 38. If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain: 39. If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life: 40. Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

We have here Job's protestation against three more sins, together with his general appeal to God's bar, and his petition for a hearing there, which, it is likely, was intended to conclude his discourse, (and therefore we will consider it last) but that another particular sin occurred, from which he thought it requisite to acquit himself. He clears himself from the charge,

1. Of dissimulation and hypocrisy, which was the general crime his friends accused him of: That under the cloak of a profession of religion, he had kept up secret haunts of sin, and that really he was as bad as other people, but had the art of concealing it: Zophar insinuated this, *chap. xx. 12*, that he hid his iniquity under his tongue; no, saith Job, that I never did, *ver. 33*. I never covered my transgression as Adam, never palliated a sin with frivolous excuses, nor made fig-leaves the shelter of my shame, nor ever hid my iniquity in my bosom, as a fondling, a darling, that I could by no means part with, or as stolen goods which he dreaded the discovery of. It is natural to us to cover our sins; we have it by kind from our first parents; we are loth to confess our faults, willing to extenuate them, and make the best of ourselves, to devolve the blame upon others, as Adam on his wife, not without a tacit reflection upon God himself: But he that thus covers his sins shall not prosper, *Prov. xxviii. 13*. Job in this protestation intimates two things, which were certain evidences of his integrity, (1.) That he was not guilty of any great transgression or iniquity, inconsistent with sincerity, which he had now industriously concealed: In this protestation he had dealt fairly, and while he denies some sins, was not conscious to himself that he allowed himself in any. (2.) That what transgression and iniquity he had been guilty of, (as who is there that lives and sins not?) he had always been ready to own it, and as soon as ever he perceived he had said or done amiss, he was ready to unsay it, and undo it as far as he could by repentance, confessing it both to God and man, and forsaking it: And this is doing honestly.

2. From the charge of cowardice and base fear. His courage in that which is good, he produces as an evidence of his sincerity in it, *ver. 34*. Did I fear a great multitude that I kept silence? No, all that knew Job, knew him to be a man of undaunted resolution in a good cause, that boldly appeared, spoke and acted in defence of religion and justice, and did not fear the face of man, nor was ever threatened or brow-beaten out of his duty, but set his face as a flint. Observe, (1.) What a great conscience Job had made of his duty as a magistrate, or a man of reputation in the place where he lived. He did not, he durst not keep silence, when he had a call to speak in an honest cause, nor keep within doors when he had a call to go abroad to do good. The case may be such, as that it may be our sin to be silent and retired, as when we are called to reprove sin, and bear our testimony against it, to vindicate the truths and ways of God, to do right

to those who are injured or oppressed, or any way to serve the public, or do honour to our religion. (2.) What little account Job made of the discouragements he met with in the way of his duty. He valued not the clamours of the mob, feared not a great multitude, nor did he value the menaces of the mighty; the contempt of families never terrified him. He was not deterred by the number or quality, the scorns or insults of the injurious from doing justice to the injured; no, he scorned to be swayed and biased by any such considerations, nor ever suffered a righteous cause to be run down by a high hand. He feared the great God, not the great multitude, and his curse, not the contempt of families.

3. From the charge of oppression and violence, and doing wrong to his poor neighbours. And here observe,

1. What his protestation is: That the estate he had, he both got and used honestly; so that his land could not cry out against him, nor the furrows thereof complain, *ver. 38*, as they do against those who get the possession of them by fraud and extortion, *Isa. ii. 9, 10, 11*. The whole creation is said to groan under the sin of man, but that which is unjustly gained and held, cries out against a man, and accuseth him; condemns him and demands justice against him for the injury. Rather than his oppression shall go unpunished, the very ground and the furrows of it shall witness against him, and be his persecutors. Two things he could say safely concerning his estate, (1.) That he never eat the fruits of it without money, *ver. 39*. What he purchased he paid for, as Abraham for the land he bought, *Gen. xxiii. 16*. and David, *2 Sam. xxiv. 4*. The labourers that he employed had their wages duly paid them, and if he made use of the fruits of those lands that he let out; he paid his tenants for them, or allowed it in their rent. (2.) That he never caused the owners thereof to lose their life, never got an estate, as Ahab got Naboth's vineyard, killing the heir and seizing the inheritance; never starved those that held lands of him, nor killed them with hard bargains and hard usage. No tenant, no workman, no servant he had could complain of him.

2. How he confirms his protestation: He doth it as often before with a suitable imprecation, *ver. 40*. If I have got my estate unjustly, let thistles grow instead of wheat: the worst of weeds instead of the best of grains. When men get estates unjustly, they are justly deprived of the comfort of them, and disappointed in their expectations from them: they sow their land, but they sow not that body that shall be; God will give it a body; it was sown wheat, but shall come up thistles. What men do not come honestly by will never do them any good.

Job towards the close of his protestation appeals to the judgment-seat of God concerning the truth of it, *ver. 34, 35, 36*. O that he would hear me, even that the Almighty would answer me! This was what he often desired, and often complained that he could not obtain; and now he had drawn up his own defence so particularly, he leaves it upon record, in expectation of a hearing, files it as it were, until his cause be called.

1. A trial is moved for, and the motion earnestly pressed; O that one, any one, would hear me, my cause is so good, and my evidence so clear, that I am willing to refer it to any indifferent person whatsoever: but my desire is that the Almighty himself would determine it. An upright heart doth not dread a scrutiny: he that means honestly wishes he had a window in his breast that all men might see the intents of his heart. But an upright heart doth particularly desire to be determined in every thing by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth. It was holy David's prayer, Search me, O God, and know my heart, and it was blessed Paul's comfort, he that judgeth me is the Lord.

2. The prosecutor is called, the plaintiff summoned, and ordered to bring in his information, to say what he has to say against the prisoner, for he stands upon his deliverance. O that mine adversary had written a book! That my friends, who charge me with hypocrisy, would draw up their charge in writing, that it might be reduced to a certainty, and that we might the better join issue upon it. Job would be very glad to see the libel, to have a copy of his indictment, he would not hide it under his arm, but take it upon his shoulder, to be seen and read of all men, nay, he would bind it as a crown to him, would be pleased with it, and look upon it as his ornament, for, (1.) If it discovered to him any sin he had been guilty of which he did not yet see, he should be glad to know it that he might repent of it and get it pardoned. A good man is willing to know the worst by himself, and will be thankful to those that will faithfully tell him his faults. (2.) If it charge him with what was false, he doubted not but to disprove the allegations, that his innocency would be cleared up as the light, and he should come off with so much the more honour. But, (3.) He did believe that when his adversaries came to consider the matter so closely, as they must do if they put the charge in writing, the accusations would be trivial and minute, and every one that saw them would say, if this was all they had to say against him, it was a shame they had given him so much trouble.

3. The defendant is ready to make his appearance, and to give his accusers all the fair play they can desire.

He will declare unto them the number of his steps, *ver. 37*. He would let them into the history of his own life, will shew them all the stages and scenes of it; he will give them a narrative of his conversation. What would make against him as well as what would make for him, and let them make what use they pleased of it: and so confident he is of his integrity, that as a prince to be crowned, rather than as a prisoner to be tried, he would go near to him, both to his accuser to hear his charge, and to his judge to hear his doom. Thus the testimony of his conscience was his rejoicing. *He murus ahenus esto, nul confire sibi*. Those that have kept their hands without spot from the world, as Job did, may lift up their faces without spot unto God, and may comfort themselves with the prospect of his judgment when they lie under the unjust censures of men. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.

And thus the words of Job are ended, *i. e.* He has now said all he would say in answer to his friends: he afterwards said something in a way of self-reproach and condemnation, *chap. xl. 4, 5*.—*xlii. 2, &c.* but here ends what he had to say in a way of self-defence and vindication. If this suffice not, he will say no more, he knows when he hath said enough, and will submit himself to the judgment of the bench. Some think the manner of expression intimates that he concluded with an air of assurance and triumph. He now keeps the field, and doubts not but to win the field. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies.

## C H A P. XXXII.

The stage is clear, for Job and his three friends are set down, and neither he nor they have any thing more to say; it is therefore very seasonable for a moderator to interpose, and Elihu is the man: in this chapter we have, (1.) Some account of him, his parentage, his presence at this dispute, and his sentiments concerning it, *ver. 1—5*. (2.) The apology he made for his bold undertaking to speak to a question, which had been so largely and learnedly argued by his seniors. He pleads, (1.) That though he had not the experience of an old man, yet he had the



the understanding of a man, ver. 6—10. (2.) That he had patiently heard all they had to say, ver. 11—13. (3.) That he had something new to offer, ver. 14—17. (4.) That his mind was full of this matter, and it would be a refreshment to him to give it vent, ver. 18—20. (5.) That he was resolved to speak impartially, ver. 21, 22. And he did speak so well to this matter, that Job made no reply to him, and God gave him no rebuke, when he checked both Job himself and his other three friends.

1. **SO** these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. 3. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. 4. Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. 5. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then his wrath was kindled.

Usually young men are the disputants, and old men the moderators: but here where old men were the disputants, as a rebuke to them for their unbecoming heat, a young man is raised up to be the moderator. Divers of Job's friends were present, that came to visit him, and to receive instruction. Now here we have,

1. The reason why his three friends were now silent: they ceased to answer him, and let him have his saying, because he was righteous in his own eyes, that was the reason they gave why they said no more, because it was to no purpose to argue with a man who was so opinionative, ver. 1. Those that are self-conceited, are indeed hard to be wrought upon, there is more hope of a fool (a fool of God's making) than of them, (who are fools of their own making) Prov. xxvi. 11. But they did not judge fairly concerning Job: he was really righteous before God, and not righteous only in his own eyes; so that it was only to save their own credit that they made this the reason of their silence, as peevish disputants commonly do when they find themselves run a-ground, and are not willing to own themselves unable to make their part good.

2. The reasons why Elihu the fourth now spoke. His name Elihu signifies *my God is he*: they had all tried in vain to convince Job, but *my God is he* that can and will do it, and did at last: none but he can open the understanding. He is said to be a Buzite, from Buz, Nahor's second son, Gen. xxii. 21. and of the kindred of Ram, i. e. Aram; so some; Gen. xxii. 21. from whence the Syrians or Aramites descended and were denominated. Of the kindred of Abram; so the Chaldee paraphrase: supposing him to be the first called Ram, high, then Abram, a high father, and lastly Abraham, the high father of a multitude: Elihu was not so well known as the rest, and therefore is more particularly described thus.

1. Elihu spoke because he was angry, and thought he had good cause to be so. When he had made his remarks upon the dispute, he did not go away and calumniate the disputants, striking them secretly with a malicious censorious tongue, but what he had to say he would say it before their faces, that they might vindicate themselves if they could.

(1.) He was angry at Job, because he thought he did not speak so reverently of God as he ought to have done: and that was too true, ver. 2. *He justified himself more than God, i. e.* He took more care and pains to clear himself from the imputation of unrighteousness in being thus afflicted, than to clear God from the imputation of unrighteousness in afflicting him, as if he were more concerned for his own honour than for God's: whereas he should in the first place have justified God, and cleared his glory, and then he might well enough have left his own reputation to shift for itself. Note, A gracious heart is jealous for the honour of his God, and cannot but be angry, when that is neglected or postponed, or any injury done it. Nor is it any breach of the law of meekness to be angry at our friends when they are offensive to God: *get thee behind me, Satan*, saith Christ to Simon. Elihu owned Job to be a good man, and yet would not say as he said, when he thought he said amiss: it is too great a compliment to our friends not to tell them of their faults.

(2.) He was angry at his friends because he thought they had not carried it so charitably towards Job as they ought to have done, ver. 3. *They had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.* They had adjudged him to be an hypocrite, and a wicked man, and would not recede from that sentence concerning him, and yet they could not prove him so, nor disprove the evidences he produced of his integrity: They could not make good the premises, and yet held fast the conclusion. They had no reply to make to his arguments, and yet they would not yield, but, right or wrong, would run him down, and this is not fair. There is seldom any quarrel begun, and more seldom carried on to that length that this was, but there is a fault on both sides: Elihu, as became a moderator, took part with neither, but was equally displeased with the mistakes and mismanagement of both. Those that in good earnest seek for truth, must thus be impartial in their judgments concerning the contenders, and not reject what is true and good on either side, for the sake of what is amiss, nor approve or defend what is amiss for the sake of what is true and good, but must learn to separate between the precious and the vile.

2. Elihu spoke because he thought it was time to speak, and that now, at length, it was come to his turn, ver. 4, 5. (1.) He had waited on Job's speeches, and patiently heard him out, until the words of Job were ended. (2.) He had waited on his friends silence; so that as he would not interrupt him, so he would not prevent them; not because they were wiser than he, but because they were elder than he, and therefore it was expected by the company that they should speak first, and Elihu was very modest, and would by no means offer to abridge them of their privilege. Some certain rules of precedency must be observed for the keeping of order; though inward real honour will attend true wisdom and worth, but because every man will think himself or his friend the wisest and worthiest, that can be no certain rule for the outward ceremonial honour, which therefore must attend the seniority either of age or office: and this respect the seniors may the better require because they paid it when they were juniors, and the juniors may the better pay, because they shall have it when they come to be seniors.

6. And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, *I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion.* 7. *I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should*

teach wisdom. 8. *But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* 9. *Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.* 10. *Therefore I said, Hearken to me, I also will shew mine opinion.* 11. *Behold I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say.* 12. *Yea, I attended unto you: and behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words.* 13. *Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man.* 14. *Now he hath not directed his words against me: neither will I answer him with your speeches.*

Elihu here appears to be,

1. A man of great modesty and humility: though a young man, and of pregnant parts, yet not pert and confident, and assuming: his face shone brighter. Let it be observed by all, especially by young people, as worthy their imitation. (1.) What a diffidence he had of himself, and of his own judgment, ver. 6. *I am young, and therefore was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion*, for fear I should either prove mistaken, or do that which was unbecoming me. He was so observant of all that passed, and applied his mind so close to what he heard, that he had formed in himself a judgment of it; he neither neglected it as a foreign, nor declined it as intricate: but how clear soever the matter was to himself, he was afraid to deliver himself upon it, because he differed in his sentiments from those that were elder than he. Note, It becomes us to be suspicious of our own judgments in matters of doubtful disputation, to be swift to hear the sentiments of others, and slow to speak our own, especially when we go contrary to the judgment of those whom upon the score of their learning and piety we justly have a veneration for. (2.) What a deference he paid to his seniors, and what great expectations he had from them, ver. 7. *I said, Days should speak*. Note, Age and experience give a man great advantage in judging of things, both as they furnish a man with so much the more matter for his thoughts to work upon, and as they ripen and improve the faculties he is to work with; which is a good reason why old people should take pains both to learn themselves, and to teach others, else the advantages of their age are a reproach to them; and why young people should attend on their instructions: it is good *judging with an old disciple*, Acts xxi. 16. Tit. ii. 4.

Elihu's modesty appeared in the patient attention he gave to what his seniors said, ver. 11, 12. He waited for their words as one that expected much from them, agreeable to the opinion he had of these grave men. He gave ear to their reasons, that he might take their meaning, and fully understand what was the drift of their discourse, and what the force of their arguments: yea, he attended to them with diligence and care: and this, (1.) Though they were slow, and took up a deal of time in searching out what to say: though they were often to seek for matter and words, paused and hesitated, and were unready at their work, yet he overlooked that and gave ear to their reasons, which if really convincing, he would not think the less so, for the disadvantages of the delivery of them. (2.) Though they trifled and made nothing of it, though they none of them answered Job's words, nor said what was proper to convince him, yet he attended to them in hopes they would bring it to some head at last. Many a time we must be willing to hear what we do not like, else we cannot prove all things. His patient attendance on their discourse he pleads, (1.) As that which entitled him to a liberty of speech in his turn, and empowered him to require their attention, *Manc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim*. They that have heard may speak, and they that have learned may teach. (2.) As that which enabled him to pass a judgment upon what they had said: he had observed what they drove at, and therefore knew what to say to it. Let us be thoroughly apprised of the sentiments of our brethren before we censure them, for he that answers a matter before he hears it, or when he has heard it, but by the halves, is a silly and shame to him, and speaks him both impertinent and imperious.

2. He appears to have been a man of great sense and courage, and one that knew as well when and how to speak, as when and how to keep silence. Though he had so much respect to his friends as not to interrupt them with his speaking, yet he had so much regard to truth and justice (his better friends) as not to betray them by his silence. He boldly pleads,

1. That man is a rational creature, and therefore every man hath for himself a judgment of discretion, and ought to be allowed a liberty of speech in his turn. He means the same that Job did, chap. xii. 3. *But I have understanding as well as you.* When he said, ver. 8. *But there is a spirit in man*, only he expresseth it a little more modestly, that one man has understanding as well as another, and no man can pretend to have the monopoly of reason, or to ingross all the trade of it. Had he meant I have revelation as well as you (as some understand it) he must have proved it, but if he mean only *I have reason as well as you*, they cannot deny it, for it is every man's honour, and it is no presumption to claim it, nor could they gain say his inference from it, ver. 10. *Therefore hearken to me.* Learn here, (1.) That the soul is a spirit, neither material itself, nor doth it depend upon matter, but is capable of conversing with things spiritual, which are not the objects of sense. (2.) It is an understanding spirit. It is able to discover and receive truth, to discourse and reason upon it, and to direct and rule accordingly. (3.) This understanding spirit is in every man: it is the light that lighteth every man, John i. 9. (4.) It is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us this understanding spirit; for he is the father of spirits, and fountain of understanding. See Gen. ii. 7. Eccl. xii. 7. Zech. xii. 1.

2. That those who are advanced above others in grandeur and gravity, do not always proportionably go beyond them in knowledge and wisdom, ver. 9. *Great men are not always wise*; it is pity but they were, for then they would never do hurt with their greatness, and would do so much the more good with their wisdom. Men should be preferred for their wisdom, and those that are in honour and power have most need of wisdom, and have the greatest opportunity of improving in it, and yet it doth not follow that great men are always wise, and therefore it is folly to subscribe to the dictates of any with an implicit faith. The aged do not always understand judgment, even they may be mistaken, and therefore must not expect to bring every thought into obedience to them: nay, therefore they must not take it as an affront to be contradicted, but rather take it as a kindness to be instructed by their juniors: *therefore I said, hearken to me*, ver. 10. We must be willing to hear reason from those that are every way inferior to us, and to yield to it. He that has a good eye can see further upon level ground, than he that is purblind can from the top of the highest mountain. *Better is a poor and wise child, than an old and foolish king*, Eccl. ix. 13.



3. That it was requisite something should be said for the settling of this controversy in a true light, which by all that had hitherto been said was but rendered more intricate and perplexed, *ver. 13.* I must speak, lest you should say, we have found out wisdom, lest you should think your argument against Job conclusive and irrefragable, and that Job cannot be convinced and humbled by any other argument but this of yours, *that God casteth him down and not man*, that it appears by his extraordinary afflictions that God is his enemy, and therefore he is certainly a wicked man; I must shew you that this is a false hypothesis, and that Job may be convinced without maintaining it. Or, lest you should think you have found out the wisest way, to reason no more with him, but leave it to God to thrust him down. It is time to speak when we hear errors advanced and disputed for, especially under pretence of supporting the cause of God with them. It is time to speak when God's judgments are vouched for the patronizing of men's pride and passion, and their unjust, uncharitable censures of their brethren, then we must speak on God's behalf.

4. That he had something new to offer, and would endeavour to manage the dispute in a better manner than it had hitherto been managed, *ver. 14.* He thinks he may expect a favourable hearing; for, (1.) He will not reply to Job's protestations of his integrity, but allows the truth of them, and therefore doth not interpose as his enemy. *He hath not directed his words against me:* I have nothing to say against the main of his discourse, nor do I differ from his principles. I have only a gentle reproof to give him for his passionate expressions. (2.) He will not repeat their arguments, nor go upon their principles; *neither will I answer him with your speeches;* not with the same matter; should I only say what has been said, I might justly be silenced as impertinent: nor in the same manner; I will not be guilty of that peevishness towards him myself, which I dislike in you. The controversy that has already been fully handled, a wise man will let alone, unless he can amend and improve what has been done; why should he *actum agere* do that which has been done already?

15. They were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking. 16. When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more). 17. *I said,* I will answer also my part, I also will shew mine opinion. 18. For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. 19. Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent, it is ready to burst like new bottles. 20. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips, and answer. 21. Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. 22. For I know not to give flattering titles, *in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.*

Three things here apologize for Elihu's interposing as he doth in this controversy, which had already been canvassed by such acute and learned disputants.

1. That the stage was clear, and he did not break in upon any of the managers on either side, *ver. 15.* They were amazed, *ver. 16.* They stood still, and answered no more. They not only left off speaking themselves, but they stood still, to hear if any of the company would speak their minds, so that (as we say) he had room and fair play given him. They seemed not fully satisfied themselves with what they had said, else they would have adjourned the court, and not have stood still, expecting what might further be offered. And therefore I said (*ver. 17.*) *I will answer also my part.* I cannot pretend to give a definitive sentence; no, the judgment is the Lord's, and by him it must be determined who is in the right, and who is in the wrong; but since you have each of you shewed your opinion, I also will shew mine, and let it take its fate with the rest. When what is offered, even by the meanest, is offered thus modestly, it is pity but it should be fairly heard and considered.

I see no inconvenience in supposing that Elihu here discovers himself to be the penman of this book; and that he here writes as an historian, relating the matter of fact, that after he had bespoke their attention in the foregoing verses, they were amazed, they left off whispering among themselves, did not gainsay the liberty of speech he desired, but stood still to hear what he would say, being much surprized at the admirable mixture of boldness and modesty that appeared in his preface.

2. That he was uneasy, and even in pain, to be delivered of his thoughts upon this matter. They must give him leave to speak, for he cannot forbear; while he is *mingling the fire burns*, *Psal. xxxix. 3. Shut up in his bones,* as the prophet speaks, *Jer. xx. 2.* Never did nurse when her breasts were gorged, so long to have them drawn, as Elihu did to deliver his mind concerning Job's case, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* If any of the disputants would have hit that which he thought was the right joint, he would contentedly have been silent, but when he thought they all missed it, he was undone to be trying his hand at it. He pleads, (1.) That he had a great deal to say; I am full of matter; having made my remarks upon all that has hitherto been said, and taken rise from it for my own thoughts. When aged men are drawn dry, and have spent their stock in discoursing of the divine Providence, God can raise up others, even young men, and fill them with matter, for the edifying of his church, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted, though they that speak to it may. (2.) That he was under a necessity of saying it. The spirit within me not only instructs me what to say, but puts me on to say it; so that if I have not vent, (such a mighty ferment are my thoughts in) I shall burst like bottles of new wine, when it is working, *ver. 19.* See what a great grief it is to a good minister to be silenced, and thrust into a corner: he is full of matter, full of Christ, full of heaven, and would speak of these things for the good of others, but he may not. (3.) That it would be an ease and satisfaction to himself to deliver his mind, *ver. 20. I will speak that I may be refreshed;* not only that I may be eased of the pain of stifling it, but that I may have the pleasure of endeavouring according to my place and capacity to do good. It is a great refreshment to a good man, to have liberty to speak for the glory of God and the edification of others.

3. That he was resolved to speak with all possible freedom and sincerity, what he thought was true, not what he thought would please, *ver. 21, 22. Let me not accept any man's person,* as partial judges do that aim to enrich themselves, not to do justice; I am resolved to flatter no man. He would not speak otherwise than he thought, either, (1.) In compassion to Job, because he was poor and in affliction; would not make his case better than he really took it to be for fear of increasing his grief; but let him hear it as he can, he shall be told the truth. Those that are in affliction must not be flattered, but dealt faithfully with: when trouble is upon any, it is foolish pity to suffer sin upon them too, (*Lec. xix. 17.*) for that is the worst addition

that can be to their trouble. Thou shalt not countenance, no more than discountenance a poor man in his cause, *Exod. xxiii. 3.* nor regard a sad look any more than a big look, so as for the sake of it to pervert justice, for that is knowing faces: Or, (2.) In compliment to Job's friends, because they were in prosperity and reputation: Let him not expect he should say as they said, any further than he was convinced they said right, nor applaud their dictates for the sake of their dignities; no, though Elihu is a young man, and upon his preferment, he will not dissemble truth to court the favour of great men: it is a good resolution he has taken up, *I know not to give flattering titles to men;* I never used myself to that language; and it is a good reason he gives for that resolution; *in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.* It is good to keep ourselves in awe with a holy fear of God's judgments: he that made us will take us away in his wrath, if we do not carry ourselves as we should. He hates all dissimulation and flattery, and will soon put lying lips to silence, and cut off flattering lips, *Psal. xii. 3.* The more closely we eye the majesty of God, as our Maker, and the more we dread his wrath and justice, the less danger shall we be in of a sinful fearing, or flattering of men.

## C H A P. XXXIII.

Pompous prefaces ostentatives, like the teeming mountain, introduce but poor performances: but Elihu's discourse here, doth not disappoint the expectations which his preface had raised: it is substantial and lively, and very much to the purpose. He had in the foregoing chapter, said what he had to say to Job's three friends; and now he comes up close to Job himself, and directs his speech to him. (1.) He bespeaks Job's favourable acceptance of what he should say, and desires he would take him for that person whom he had so often wished for, that would plead with him, and receive his plea on God's behalf, *ver. 1—7.* (2.) He doth in God's name bring an action against him, for words, which in the heat of disputation he had spoken, reflecting upon God as dealing hardly with him, *ver. 8—11.* (3.) He endeavours to convince him of his fault and folly herein, by shewing him, (1.) God's sovereign dominion over man, *ver. 12, 13.* (2.) The care God takes of man, and the various ways and means he useth to do his soul good, which we have reason to think he designs, when he lays bodily afflictions upon him, *ver. 14.* (1.) Job had sometimes complained, of unquiet dreams, *chap. vii. 14.* Why, faith Elihu, God sometimes speaks conviction and instructions to men by such dreams, *ver. 15—18.* (2.) Job had especially complained of his sicknesses and pains; and as to these, he shews largely, that they were so far from being tokens of God's wrath, as Job took them, or evidences of Job's hypocrisy, as his friends took them, that they were really wise and gracious methods, which divine grace took for the increase of his acquaintance with God, to work patience, experience, and hope, *ver. 19—30.* And, lastly, he concludes with a request to Job, either to answer him, or give him leave to go on, *ver. 31—33.*

1. **W**herefore Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words. 2. Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth. 3. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart; and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly. 4. The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. 5. If thou canst answer me, let thy words in order before me, stand up. 6. Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay. 7. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.

Several arguments Elihu here useth to persuade Job not only to give him a patient hearing, but to believe that he designed him a good office; and to take it kindly, and be willing to receive the instructions he was now about to give him. Let Job consider,

1. That Elihu doth not join with his three friends against him: he hath in the foregoing chapter declared his dislike of their proceeding, disclaimed their hypothesis, and quite set aside the method they took of healing Job. Wherefore, Job, *I pray thee, hear my speech,* *ver. 1.* They were all in the same flock, all spoke in the same strain; but I am trying a new way, therefore *hearken to all my words,* and not to some of them only; for we cannot judge of a discourse unless we take it entire, and hearken to it all.

2. That he intended to make a solemn business of it, not to put in a word by the by, or give a short repartee to shew his wit, but after long silence he opened his mouth, *ver. 2.* with deliberation and design; upon mature consideration he had already begun to speak, and was prepared to go on, if Job would encourage him by his attention.

3. That he was resolved to speak as he thought and not otherwise, *ver. 3. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart,* the genuine product of my convictions and sentiments. There was reason to suspect, that Job's three friends did not think in their consciences that Job was so ill a man as they had in their discourses represented him to be, merely for the support of their hypothesis; and that was not fair: It is a base thing to condemn those with our tongues, to serve a turn, whom, at the same time, we cannot but in our consciences think well of: Elihu is an honest man, and scorns to do so.

4. That what he said should be easy and not dark and hard to be understood: *My lips shall utter knowledge clearly.* Job shall readily take his meaning, and find what he drives at. Those that speak of the things of God, should carefully avoid all obscurity and perplexedness, both of notion and expression, and speak as plainly and clearly as they can; for by that will appear that they do themselves understand what they speak of, that they mean honestly, and design the edification of those they speak to.

5. That he would in his discourse make the best use he could of the reason and understanding God hath given him, that life, that rational soul, which he received from the Spirit of God and breath of the Almighty, *ver. 4.* He owns himself unfit to enter into the lists with his seniors, yet he desires they will not despise his youth, for he is God's workmanship as well as they, made by the same hand, endued with the same noble powers and faculties, and designed for the same great end, and therefore why may not the God that made him, make use of him as an instrument of good to Job: With this consideration also we should quicken ourselves (and perhaps Elihu made that use of it) to do good in our places, according to our capacity; God has made us, and given us life, and therefore we should study to use our life to some good purpose, to spend it in glorifying God, and serving our



our generation according to his will, that we may answer the end of our creation, and that it may not be said, we were made in vain.

6. That he would be very willing to hear what Job could object against what he had to say, *ver. 3. If thou canst answer me: If thou hast so much strength of spirit left thee, and art not quite spent with the distemper; set thy words in order, and they shall have their due consideration. Those that can speak reason, will hear reason.*

7. That he had often wished for one that would appear for God, with whom he might freely expostulate, and to whom, as arbitrator, he might refer the matter, and such a one Elihu would be, *ver. 6. I am according to thy wish, in God's stead. How pathetically had Job wished, chap. xvi. 21. O that one might plead for a man with God! and chap. xxiii. 3. O that I knew where I might find him! only he would make it his bargain that his dread should not make him afraid, chap. xiii. 21. Now, saith Elihu, look upon me this once, as in God's stead; I will undertake to plead his cause with thee, and to shew thee wherein thou hast affronted him, and what he hath against thee; and what appeals or complaints thou hast to make to God, make them to me.*

8. That he was not an unequal match for him. *I also am formed out of the clay. I also as well as the first man, Gen. ii. 7. I also as well as thou. Job had urged this with God, as a reason why he should not hear hard upon him, chap. x. 9: Remember that thou hast made me as the clay; why, saith Elihu, I am formed out of the clay, as well as thou, formed of the same clay, so some read it. It is good for us all to consider that we are formed out of the clay; and well for us it is, that those who are to us in God's stead are so; that he speaks to us by men like ourselves, according to Israel's wish, upon a full trial, Deut. v. 24. God has wisely deposited the treasure in earthen vessels like ourselves, 2 Cor. iv. 7.*

Lastly, that he would have no reason to be affrighted at the assault he made upon him, *ver. 7. My terror shall not make thee afraid. (1.) As thy friends have done with their arguings. I will not fall so foul upon thee as they have done, nor draw up such a heavy charge against thee. Nor, (2.) As God would do, if he should appear to reason with thee: I stand upon the same level with thee, and am made of the same mould, and therefore cannot impress that terror upon thee, which thou mayest justly dread from the appearance of the divine majesty. If we would rightly convince men, it must be by reason not by terror: by fair arguing not by a heavy hand.*

8. Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, 9. I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. 10. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy. 11. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths. 12. Behold, in this thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man. 13. Why dost thou strive against him; for he giveth not account of any of his matters.

In these verses,

1. Elihu particularly chargeth Job with some indecent expressions that had dropped from him, reflecting upon the justice and goodness of God in his dealings with him. He doth not ground the charge upon report, but was himself an ear-witness of what he here reproves him for, *ver. 8. Thou hast spoken it in my hearing, and in the hearing of all this company. He had it not at second hand; if so, he would have hoped it had not been so bad as it was represented: he did not hear it from Job in private conversation, then he would not have been so ill-bred as to repeat it thus publicly; but Job had said it openly, and therefore it was fit he should be openly reprov'd for it. Them that sin before all, rebuke before all. When we hear any thing said that tends to God's dishonour, we ought publicly to bear our testimony against it: What is said amiss to our hearing, we are concerned to reprove, for ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, to confront the accuser.*

(1.) Job had represented himself as innocent, *ver. 9. Thou hast said, I am clean without transgression; Job had not said this totidem verbis; nay, he had owned himself to have sinned, and to be impure before God; but he had indeed said, Thou knowest that I am not wicked: My righteousness I hold fast, and the like, on which Elihu might ground this charge. It was true, that Job was a perfect and an upright man, and not such a one as his friends had represented him: but he ought not to have insisted so much upon it, as if God had therefore done him wrong in afflicting him: Yet it should seem, Elihu did not deal fairly in charging Job with saying, that he was clean and innocent from all transgression, when he only pleaded that he was upright and innocent from the great transgression; but those that speak passionately and unwarily, must thank themselves if they be misunderstood: they should have taken more care.*

(2.) He had represented God as severe in marking what he did amiss, and taking all advantages against him, *ver. 10, 11. as if he lay at catch to pick quarrels with him. He findeth occasions against me: Which supposeth seeking them; to this purpose Job had spoken, chap. xiv. 16, 17. Dost thou not watch over my sin? He counteth me for his enemy. So he had expressly said, chap. xiii. 24.—xix. 11. He putteth my feet in the stocks; that as I cannot contend with him, so I may not be able to flee from him; this he had said, chap. xiii. 27. And that he marketh my paths, in the same place.*

2. He endeavours to convince him that he had spoken amiss in speaking thus, and that he ought to humble himself before God for it, and by repentance to unsay it, *ver. 12. Behold, in this thou art not just. Here thou art not in the right, so some read it. See the difference between the charge which Elihu exhibited against Job, and that which was preferred against him by his other friends, they would not own that he was just at all, but Elihu only saith, in this, in saying this, thou art not just. (1.) Thou dost not deal justly with God: To be just is to render to all their due: now we do not render God his due, nor are we just to him, if we do not acknowledge his equity and kindness in all the dispensations of his providence towards us, that he is righteous in all his ways, and that however it be yet he is good. (2.) Thou dost not speak the language of a righteous man; I do not deny but thou art such a one, but in this thou dost not make it to appear. Many that are just, yet in some particular instances do not speak and act like themselves; and on the other hand, we must not fail to tell even a good man, wherein he mistakes and doth amiss, nor flatter him in his errors and passions, for in that we are not kind; so on the other hand, we must not draw mens characters, nor pass a judgment on them by one instance, or some few misplaced words, for in that we are not just. In many things we all offend, and therefore must be candid in our censures.*

Two things Elihu proposed to Job's consideration, to convince him that he had said amiss.

1. That God is infinitely above us, and therefore it is madness to contend with him, for if he plead against us with his great power we cannot stand before him. *I will answer thee, saith Elihu, in one word, which carries its own evidence along with it, That God is greater than man; no doubt he is infinitely greater: Between God and man there is no proportion. Job had himself said a great deal and admirably well, concerning the greatness of God, his irresistible power and incontestible sovereignty, his terrible majesty and unsearchable imminity: Now, (saith Elihu) do but consider what thou thyself hast said concerning the greatness of God, and apply it to thyself: If he is greater than man, he is greater than me, and thou wilt see reason enough to repent of these ill-natured, ill-favoured reflections upon him, and to blush at thy folly, and tremble to think of thine own presumption. Note, There is enough in this one plain unquestionable truth, That God is greater than man, if duly approved, for ever to put to silence and put to shame all our complaints of his providence, and our exceptions against his dealing with us. He is not only more wise and powerful than we are, and therefore it is to no purpose to contend with him, who will be too hard for us, but more holy, just and good, for these are the transcendent glories and excellencies of the divine nature; in these God is greater than man, and therefore it is absurd and unreasonable to find fault with him, for he is certainly in the right.*

2. That God is not accountable to us, *ver. 13. Why dost thou strive against him? Those that complain of God strive against him, implead him, impeach him, bring an action against him: And why do they do so? For what cause? To what purpose? Note, It is an unreasonable thing for us, weak, foolish, sinful creatures, to strive with a God of infinite wisdom, power and goodness. Woe to the clay that strives with the potter: For he gives no account of any of his matters. He is under no obligation to shew us a reason for what he doth, neither to tell us what he designs to do; in what method, at what time, by what instruments; nor to tell us why he deals thus with us: He is not bound either to justify his own proceedings, or to satisfy our demands and enquiries; his judgments will certainly justify themselves; if we do not satisfy ourselves in them, it is our own fault: It is therefore daring impiety for us to arraign God at our bar, or challenge him to shew cause for what he doth, to say unto him, What dost thou? or Why dost thou so? He giveth not account of all his matters; so some read it: He reveals as much as it is fit for us to know, as follows here, *ver. 14. But still there are secret things which belong not to us, which it is not fit for us to pry into.**

14. For God speaketh once, yea, twice; yet man perceived it not. 15. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed: 16. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, 17. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. 18. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

Job had complained, that God kept him wholly in the dark concerning the meaning of his dealings with him; and therefore concluded he dealt with him as his enemy; No, saith Elihu, he speaks to you, but you do not perceive him; so that the fault is your's not his: and is designing your real good, even in those dispensations which you put this harsh construction upon. Observe in general, *ver. 14.*

1. What a friend God is to our welfare, *He speaketh to us once, yea, twice. It is a token of his favour, that notwithstanding the distance and quarrel between us and him, yet he is pleased to speak to us: It is an evidence he designs our good, that he is pleased to speak to us of our own concerns, to shew us what is our duty, and what is our interest, and what he requires of us, and what we may expect from him; to tell us of our faults, and warn us of our danger; to shew us the way, and to lead us in it: This he doth once, yea twice, i. e. again and again; when one warning is neglected he gives another, not willing that any should perish; Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line. And so it is, that sinners may be left inexcusable.*

2. What enemies we are to our own welfare: *Man perceives it not, i. e. He doth not heed it or regard it; he doth not discern or understand it; is not aware that it is the voice of God, nor doth he receive the things revealed, for they are foolishness to him: he stops his ear, stands in his own light, rejects the counsel of God against himself, and so is never the wiser, no not for the dictates of wisdom itself.*

God speaks to us by conscience, by providences, and by ministers: of all which Elihu here discourseth at large, to shew Job, that God was both telling him his mind, and doing him a kindness, even now he seemed to keep him in the dark, and so treat him as a stranger, and to keep him in distress, and so treat him as an enemy. There was not then, that we know of, any divine revelation in writing, and therefore that is not here mentioned among the ways by which God speaketh to men, though now it is the principal way. In these verses he shews how God teacheth and admonisheth the children of men by their own consciences. Observe,

1. The proper season and opportunity for these admonitions, *ver. 15. In a dream, in slumberings upon the bed, when men are retired from the world, and the business and conversation of it; then is a good time for them to retire into their own hearts, and commune with them when they are upon their beds, solitary and still, Psal. iv. 4. And that time God takes for dealing personally with men. (1.) When he sent angels, extraordinary messengers on his errands, he commonly chose that time for the delivery of them; when by deep sleep fallen on men, the bodily senses were all locked up, and the mind more free to receive the immediate communications of divine light: Thus he made his mind known to the prophets by visions and dreams, Num. xii. 6. thus he warned Abimelech, Gen. xx. 3. Laban, Gen. xxxi. 24. Joseph, Matt. i. 21. Thus he made known to Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, things that should come to pass hereafter. (2.) When he stirred up conscience, that ordinary deputy of his, in the soul, to do its office, he took that opportunity, either when deep sleep fell upon men, for though dreams mostly come from fancy, some may come from conscience: Or, in slumberings, when men are between sleep and wake, reflecting at night upon the business of the foregoing day, or projecting in the morning the business of the ensuing day, then it is a proper time for their hearts to reprove them for what they have done ill, and to admonish them what they should do. See Isa. xxx. 21.*

2. The power and force with which those admonitions come, *ver. 16. When God designs mens good, by the convictions and dictates of their own consciences, (1.) He gives them the letting in, and makes them to be heeded; then he opens the ears of men, which were before shut against the voice of this charmer, Psal. lviii. 5. He opens the heart, as he opened Lydia's, and so opens the ears: He takes away that which stopped the ear, so that the conviction finds or forceth its way; nay, he works in the soul a submission to the regimen of conscience, and a compliance with its rules for*



for that follows upon God's opening the ear, *Iſa. 1. 6. God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious.* (2.) He gives them the setting on, and makes them to abide, he sealeth their instructions, i. e. the instruction that is designed for them; and is suited to them, thus he makes their souls to receive the deep and lasting impression of, as the wax of the seal: When the heart is delivered into divine instructions, as into a mould, then the work is done.

3. The end and design of these admonitions that are sent.

1. To keep men from sin, and particularly the sin of pride; *ver. 17. That he may withdraw man from his purpose, i. e. from his evil purposes; may change the temper of his mind, and the course of his life, his disposition and inclination; or prevent some particular sin he is in danger of falling into: May withdraw man from his work; may make him leave off man's work, which is working for the world and the flesh, and may set him to work the work of God. Many a man has been stopped in the full career of a sinful pursuit by the seasonable checks of his own conscience, saying, Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates. Particularly, God doth by this means hide pride from man; i. e. hide those things from him which are the matter of his pride, and take his mind off from dwelling upon them, by setting before him what reasons he has to be humble: that he may take away pride from man, so some read it; that he may pluck up that root of bitterness which is the cause of so much sin. All those whom God has mercy in store for, he will humble and hide pride from. Pride makes people eager and resolute in the prosecution of their purposes, they will have their way, therefore God withdraws them from their purposes, by mortifying their pride.*

2. To keep men from ruin, *ver. 18.* While sinners are pursuing their evil purposes and indulging their pride, their souls are hastening apace to the pit, to the sword, to destruction, both in this world and that to come: but when God by the admonitions of conscience, withdraws them from sin, he thereby keeps back their souls from the pit, from the bottomless pit, and saves them from perishing by the sword of divine vengeance, so iniquity shall not be their ruin. That which turns men from sin, saves them from hell, *saves a soul from death, James v. 20.* See what a mercy it is to be under the restraints of an awakened conscience; faithful are the wounds, and kind are the bonds of that friend, for the soul is kept from perishing eternally.

19. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: 20. So that his life abhorreth bread and his soul dainty meat. 21. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen, stick out. 22. Yea his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. 23. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: 24. Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom. 25. His flesh shall be freer than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth. 26. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. 27. He looketh upon men, and if any say I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; 28. He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

God hath spoken once to sinners by their own consciences, to keep them from the paths of the destroyer, but they perceive it not; they are not aware that the checks their own hearts give them in a sinful way, are from God, but they are imputed to melancholy or the preciseness of their education: and therefore God speaketh twice: Speaks a second time, and tries another way to convince and reclaim sinners, and that is by providences, afflictive and merciful, (in which he speaketh twice) and by the seasonable instructions of good ministers setting in with them. Job complained much of his diseases, and judged by them that God was angry with him; his friends did so too: but Elihu shews they were all mistaken, for God often afflicts the body in love, and with gracious designs of good to the soul, as appears in the issue which here it is brought to; and of great use this part of Elihu's discourse will be to us for the due improvement of sickness, in and by which God speaketh to men. Here is,

1. The patient described in his extremity: See what work sickness makes, *ver. 19, &c.* when God sends it with commission; *Do this, and he doeth it.*

1. The sick man is full of pain all over him, *ver. 14. He is chastened with pain upon his bed,* such pain as confines him to his bed: or, so extreme the pain is, that he can get no ease, no, not on his bed where he would repose himself: pain and sickness will turn a bed of down into a bed of thorns, on which he that used to sleep, now toseth to and fro till the dawning of the day. The case, as here put, is very bad; pain is more hardly borne than sickness, and with that the patient here is chastened; not a dull heavy pain, but strong and acute; and many times the stronger the patient, the stronger the pain, for the more sanguine the complexion is, the more violent commonly the disease is. It is not the smarting of the flesh that is complained of, but the aching of the bones. It is an inward rooted pain; and not only the bones of one limb, but the multitude of the bones, are thus chastened. See what frail, what vile bodies we have, which, though receiving no external hurt, may be thus pained from causes within themselves; see what work sin makes, what mischief it doth: Pain is the fruit of sin; yet by the grace of God, the pain of the body is often made a means of good to the soul.

(2.) He has quite lost his stomach, the common effect of sickness, *ver. 20. His life abhorreth bread;* the most necessary food, and dainty meat, which he most delighted in, and formerly relished with a great deal of pleasure. This is a good reason why we should not be desirous of dainties, because they are deceitful meat, *Prov. xxiii. 3.* We may be soon made as sick of them, as we are now fond of them; and those who live in luxury when they are well, if ever they come by reason of sickness to loathe dainty meat, may with grief and shame read their sin in their punishment. Let us not inordinately love the taste of meat, for the time may come when we may even loathe the sight of meat, *Psal. cvii. 18.*

(3.) He is become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, *ver. 21.* By sickness, perhaps a few days sickness, his flesh which was fat, and fair, and plump, is consumed away that it cannot be seen: it is strangely

wasted and gone, and his bones, that were buried in flesh, now stick out: you may count his ribs, may tell all his bones. The soul that is well nourished with the bread of life, sickness will not make lean, but it soon makes a change in the body.

"He who before had such a beautiful air,  
"And pamper'd with his ease, seem'd plump and fair;  
"Doth all his friends (amazing change!) surprise,  
"With pale lean cheeks, and ghastly hollow eyes;  
"His bones, a horrid sight, start thro' his skin,  
"Which lay before, in flesh and fat, unseen."

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

(4.) He is given up for gone, and his life despaired of, *ver. 22. His soul draws near to the grave, i. e.* He has all the symptoms of death upon him; and in the apprehension of all about him, as well as in his own, he is a dying man. The pangs of death, here called the destroyers, are just ready to seize him; they compass him about, *Psal. cxvi. 3.* Perhaps it intimates the very dreadful apprehensions which those have of death as a destroying thing, when it stares them in the face, who, when it was at a distance, made light of it: All agree when it comes to the setting to, whatever they thought of it before, that it is a serious thing to die.

2. The provision made for his instruction, in order to a sanctified use of his affliction, that when God in that way speaketh to man, he may be heard and understood, and not speak in vain, *ver. 23.* He is happy, if there be a messenger with him to attend him in his sickness, to convince, counsel, and comfort him, an interpreter to expound the providence, and give him to understand the meaning of it, a man of wisdom that knows the voice of the rod and its interpretation; for many a time when God speaks by afflictions, we are so unversed in the language, that we have need of an interpreter; and it is well if we have such a one: The advice and help of a good minister is as needful and seasonable, and should be as acceptable in sickness, as of a good physician; especially if he be well skilled in the art of explaining and improving providences, which if he be, he is one of a thousand, and to be valued accordingly; and his business at such a time is to shew unto man his uprightness, i. e. God's uprightness, that in faithfulness he afflicts him, and doth him no wrong; which it is necessary we be convinced of, in order to our making a due improvement of the affliction; or rather man's uprightness, or rectitude: (1.) The uprightness that is: If it appear that the sick person is truly pious, the interpreter will not do as Job's friend had done, make it his business to prove him an hypocrite, because he is afflicted; but on the contrary will shew him his uprightness, notwithstanding his afflictions, that he may take the comfort of it, and be easy whatever the event is. (2.) The uprightness, the reformation that should be, in order to life and peace. When men are made to see the way of uprightness to be the only way, and a sure way to salvation, and to choose it, and walk in it accordingly, the work is done.

3. God's gracious acceptance of him upon his repentance, *ver. 24.* When he sees that the sick person is indeed convinced that sincere repentance, and that uprightness which is gospel perfection, is his interest as well as duty, then he that waits to be gracious, and shews mercy upon the first indication of true repentance, is gracious unto him, and takes him into his favour and thoughts for good. Wherever God finds a gracious heart, he will be found a gracious God: And (1.) He will give a gracious order for his discharge: He saith, Deliver him, i. e. let him be delivered from going down to the pit, from that death which is the wages of sin: When afflictions have done their work, they shall be removed: When we return to God in a way of duty, he will return to us in a way of mercy. Those shall be delivered from going down to the pit, who receive God's messengers, and rightly understand his interpreters, so as to subscribe to his uprightness. (2.) He will give a gracious reason for his order, I have found a ransom, or propitiation; Jesus Christ is that ransom, so Elihu calls him, as Job had called him his Redeemer, for he is both the purchaser and the price, the priest and the sacrifice; so high was the value put upon souls, that nothing less would redeem them, and so great the injury done by sin that nothing less would atone for it than the blood of the Son of God, who gave his life a ransom for many. This is a ransom of God's finding, a contrivance of infinite wisdom; we could never have found it ourselves, and the angels themselves could never have found it; it is the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom; and such an invention as is, and will be the everlasting wonder of those principalities and powers that desire to look upon it. Observe how God glories in the invention here, *(εὐρηκα, εὐρηκα) I have found, I have found the ransom I, even I, am he that hath done it.*

4. The recovery of the sick man hereupon. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease. When the patient becomes a penitent, see what a blessed change follows.

(1.) His body recovers its health, *ver. 25.* This is not always the consequent of a sick man's repentance and return to God, but sometimes it is; and recovery from sickness is then a mercy indeed, when it arises from the remission of sin, then it is in love to the soul that the body is delivered from the pit of corruption, when God casts our sins behind his back, *Iſa. xxxviii. 17.* That is the method of a blessed recovery; *Son, be of good cheer thy sins be forgiven thee; and then rise, take up thy bed and walk, Matt. ix. 2-6.* So here, interest him in the ransom, and then his flesh shall be freer than a child's, and there shall be no remains of his distemper, but he shall return to the days of his youth, to the beauty and strength which he had then; when the distemper that oppressed nature is removed, how strangely doth nature help itself, in which the power and goodness of the God of nature must be thankfully acknowledged! By such merciful providences as these, which afflictions give occasion for, God speaketh once, yea twice, to the children of men, letting them know (if they would but perceive it) their dependance upon him, and his tender compassion of them.

(2.) His soul recovers its peace, *ver. 26.* (1.) The patient being a penitent is a suppliant, and has learned to pray; he knows God will be sought unto for his favours, and therefore he shall pray unto God, pray for pardon, pray for health: *Is any afflicted? any sick? let him pray.* When he finds himself recovering, he shall not then think that prayer is no longer necessary, for we need the grace of God as much for the sanctifying of a mercy, as for the sanctifying of an affliction. (2.) His prayers are accepted. God will be favourable to him, and be well pleased with him, his anger shall be turned away from him, and the light of God's countenance shall shine upon his soul; and then it follows, (3.) That he has the comfort of communion with God; he shall now see the face of God, which before was hid from him, and he shall see it with joy, for what light can be more reviving? (See *Gen. xxiii. 10.*) *As though I had seen the face of God.* All true penitents rejoice more in the returns of God's favour, than in any instance whatsoever of prosperity or pleasure, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* (4.) He has a blessed tranquillity of mind, arising from the sense of his justification before God, who will render unto this man his righteousness: He shall receive the atonement, i. e. the comfort of it, *Rom. v. 11.* Righteousness shall be imputed



puted to him, and peace thereupon spoken, the joy and gladness of which he shall then be made to hear, though he could not hear it in the day of his affliction. God will now deal with him as a righteous man, with whom it shall be well. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness, Psal. xxiv. 5. God shall give him grace to go and sin no more. Perhaps this may speak the reformation of his life after his recovery: As he shall pray unto God, whom before he had slighted, so he shall render to man his righteousness, whom before he had wronged, shall make restitution, and for the future do justly.

5. The general rule which God will go by in dealing with the children of men, inferred from this instance, ver. 27, 28. As sick people upon their submission are recovered, so all others that truly repent of their sins shall find mercy with God. See here, (1.) What sin is, and what reason we have not to sin. Would we know the nature of sin, and the malignity of it? It is the perverting of that which is right; it is a most unjust, unreasonable thing, it is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator, the usurped dominion of the flesh over the spirit, and a contradiction to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil: It is *perverting the right ways of the Lord*, Acts xiii. 10. and therefore the ways of sin are called crooked ways, Psal. cxxv. 5. Would we know what is to be got by sin? *It profiteth us not*. The works of darkness are unfruitful works, when profit and loss come to be balanced, all the gains of sin, put them all together, will come far short of countervailing the damage. All true penitents are ready to own this; and it is a mortifying consideration, Rom. xi. 21. *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* (2.) See what repentance is, and what reason we have to repent. Would we approve ourselves true penitents, we must then, with a broken and contrite heart, confess our sins to God, 1 John i. 9. Confess the fact of sin. I have sinned; and not deny the charge, or stand upon our own justification; confess the fault of sin, the iniquity, the dishonesty of it; I have perverted that which was right: The folly of sin, so foolish have I been and ignorant, for it profited me not; and therefore what have I to do any more with it? And is there not good reason why we should make such a penitent confession as this? For, (1.) God expects it: He looks upon men when they have sinned, to see what they will do next, whether they will go on in it, or whether they will bethink themselves, and return. He hearkens and hears whether any say, *what have I done?* Jer. viii. 6. He looks upon sinners with an eye of compassion, desiring to hear this from them, for he has no pleasure in their ruin. He looks upon them, and as soon as he perceives these workings of repentance in them, he encourageth them, and is ready to accept them, Psal. xxxii. 4, 5. as the father went forth to meet the returning prodigal. (2.) It will turn to our unspeakable advantage. The promise is general; if any humble themselves thus, whoever they are, 1. They shall not come into condemnation, but be saved from the wrath to come. *He shall deliver his soul from going into the pit*, the pit of hell; iniquity shall not be his ruin. 2. They shall be happy in everlasting life and joy: *His life shall see the light*, i. e. all good, is the vision and fruition of God. To obtain this bliss, if the prophet had bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? How much more, when he only saith unto us, *wash and be clean*; confess and be pardoned, repent and be saved?

29. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man. 30. To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living. 31. Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me, hold thy peace, and I will speak. 32. If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee. 33. If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

We have here the conclusion of this first part of Elihu's discourse, in which,

1. He briefly sums up what he had said, shewing that God's great and gracious design in all the dispensations of his providence towards the children of men, is to save them from being for ever miserable, and bring them to be for ever happy, ver. 29, 30. All these things God is working with the children of men, dealing with them by conscience, by providences, by ministers, by mercies, by afflictions, makes them sick, and makes them well again; all these are his operation: He hath set the one over against the other, Eccles. vii. 14. but his hand is in all; it is he that performeth all things for us. All providences are to be looked upon as God's workings with man, his strivings with him. He useth variety of methods to do men good; if one affliction do not do the work, he will try another; if neither do, he will try a mercy; will send a messenger to interpret both: He works such things as these oftentimes twice, thrice; for it is in the original, referring to ver. 14. *He speaketh once, yea, twice*; if that prevail not, he worketh twice, yea, thrice; changes his method, we have piped, we have mourned, returns again to the same method, repeats the same applications: And why doth he take all this pains with man? It is to bring back his soul from the pit, ver. 30. If God did not take more care of us than we do of ourselves, we were miserable: we would destroy ourselves, but he would have us saved, and devise means, by his grace, to undo that by which we were undoing ourselves. The former method by dream and vision was to keep back the soul from the pit, ver. 18. i. e. to prevent sin, that we might not fall into it: This by sickness, and the word, is to bring back the soul, to recover those that are fallen into sin, that they may not lie still and perish in it. And all that by repentance are brought back from the pit, it is that they may be enlightened with the light of the living, that they may have present comfort and everlasting happiness. Whom God saves from sin and hell, which are darkness, he will bring to heaven the inheritance of the saints in light: and this he aims at, this he drives at in all his institutions; and all his dispensations. *Lord, what is man that thou shouldst thus visit him!* This should engage us to comply with God's design, to work with him for our own good, and not to counter-work him: and this will render those that perish for ever inexcusable, that so much was done to save them, and they would not be healed.

2. He bespeaks Job's acceptance of what he had offered, and begs of him to mark it well, ver. 31. What is intended for our good, challengeth our regard. And if Job will observe what is said, (1.) He is welcome to make what objections he can against it, ver. 32. *If thou hast any thing to say for thyself in thine own vindication*, answer me; though I am fresh, and thou art spent, I will not run thee down with words, *Speak, for I desire to justify thee*, and am not as thy other friends that desired to condemn thee: Elihu contends for truth, not as they did, for victory. Note, Those we reprove, we should desire to justify, and be glad to see them clear themselves from the imputations they lie under, and therefore give them all possible advantage and encouragement to do it. (2.) If he has nothing to say against what is said, Elihu lets him know that he has something more to say, which he

desires him patiently to attend to, ver. 33. *Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom*. Those that would both shew wisdom and learn wisdom, must hearken and keep silence, be swift to hear and slow to speak. Job was wise and good, but those that are so may yet be wiser and better, and must therefore set themselves to improve by the means of wisdom and grace.

## C H A P. XXXIV.

Elihu, it is likely, paused a while, to see if Job had any thing to say against his discourse in the foregoing chapter; but he sitting silent, and, it is likely, intimating his desire that he would go on, he here proceeds. And, (1.) He bespeaks not only the audience, but the assistance of the company, ver. 2—4. (2.) He charged Job with some more indecent expressions that had dropped from him, ver. 5—9. (3.) He undertakes to convince him that he had spoken amiss, by shewing very fully, (1.) God's incontestible justice, ver. 10—12—17—19—23. (2.) His sovereign dominion, ver. 13—15. (3.) His almighty power, ver. 20—24. (4.) His omniscience, ver. 21, 22—25. (5.) His severity against sinners, ver. 26—28. (6.) His over-ruling providence, ver. 29, 30. (5.) He teacheth him what he should say, ver. 31, 32. And then, lastly, he leaves the matter to Job's own conscience, and concludes with a sharp reproof of him, for his peevishness and discontent, ver. 33—37. And all this Job not only bore patiently, but he took kindly, because he saw Elihu meant well; and whereas his other friends had accused him of that from which his own conscience acquitted him, Elihu charged him with that only for which, it is probable, his own heart, now upon the reflection, began to smite him.

1. Furthermore Elihu answered and said, 2. Hear my words, O ye wise men, and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge. 3. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. 4. Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good. 5. For Job hath said I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. 6. Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression. 7. What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? 8. Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walked with wicked men. 9. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.

Here, (1.) Elihu humbly addresseth himself to the auditors, and endeavours, like an orator, to gain their good-will, and their favourable attention. (1.) He calls them wise men, and men that had knowledge, ver. 2. It is comfortable dealing with such as understand sense: *I speak as to wise men*, who can judge what I say, 1 Cor. x. 15. Elihu differed in opinion from them, and yet he calls them wise and knowing men: Peevish disputants think all fools that are not of their mind; but it is justice we owe to those who are wise, to acknowledge it, though our sentiments do not agree with theirs. (2.) He appeals to their judgment, and therefore submits to their trial, ver. 3. The ear of the judicious tries words, whether what is said be true or false, right or wrong, and he that seeks must stand the test of the intelligent. As we must prove all things we hear, so we must be willing what we speak should be proved. (3.) He takes them in partners with him in the examination and discussion of this matter, ver. 4. He doth not pretend to be sole dictator, nor undertake to say what is just and good, and what is not, but he is willing to join with them in searching it out, and desires a consultation: Let us agree to lay aside all animosities and feuds, all prejudices and affection of contradiction, and all stiffness in adhering to the opinion we have once espoused, and let us choose to ourselves judgment; let us fix right principles on which to proceed, and then take right methods for finding out truth; and let us know among ourselves, by comparing notes and communicating our reasons, what is good and what is otherwise. Note, We are then likely to discern what is right, when we agree to assist one another in searching it out.

2. He warmly accuseth Job for some passionate words which he had spoken, that reflected on the divine government, appealing to the house, whether he ought not to be called to the bar and checked for them.

1. He recites the words which Job had spoken, as near as he can remember. (1.) He had insisted upon his own innocency; Job hath said, *I am righteous*, ver. 5. and when urged to confess his guilt, has stiffly maintained his plea of Not guilty. *Should I lie against my right?* ver. 6. Job had spoken to this purpose, chap. xxvii. 6. *My righteousness I hold fast*. (2.) He had charged God with injustice in his dealings with him, that he had wronged him in afflicting him, and had not righted him; *God has taken away my judgment*; so Job had said, chap. xxvii. 2. (3.) He had despaired of relief, and concluded that God could not or would not help him, my wound is incurable and likely to be mortal, and yet without transgression; *not for any injustice in my hand*, chap. xvi. 16, 17. (4.) He had in effect said, that there is nothing to be got in the service of God, and that no man will be the better at last for his religion, ver. 9. *He hath said that which gives occasion to suspect that he thinks, It profiteth a man nothing that he shall delight himself with God*. It is granted that there is a present pleasure in religion, for what is it but to delight ourselves in walking with him as Enoch did; this is a true notion of religion, and speaks its ways to be pleasantness: And yet the advantage of it is denied, as if it were vain to serve God, Mal. iii. 14. This Elihu gathers as Job's opinion, by an innuendo from what he said, chap. ix. 22. *He destroys the perfect and the wicked*, which has a truth in it, for all things come alike to all, but it was ill expressed, and gave too much occasion for this imputation, and therefore Job sat down silent under it, and attempted not his own vindication; whence Mr. Caryl well observes, That good men sometimes speak worse than they mean: And that a good man will rather bear more blame than he deserves, than stand to excuse himself when he hath deserved any blame.

2. He charged Job very high upon it. In general, *what man is like Job?* ver. 7. Did you ever know such a man as Job, or ever hear a man talk at such an extravagant rate? He represents him, (1.) As sitting in the seat of the scornful: *He drinketh up scorning like water*, i. e. he takes a great deal of liberty to reproach both God and his friends, takes a pleasure in it, and is very liberal in his reflections. Or, he is very greedy in receiving and hearkening to the scorns and contempts which others cast upon their brethren, is well pleased with them, and cries them up. Or, as some explain it, by these foolish expressions of his, he makes himself the object of scorn, lays himself very open to reproach, and gives occasion to others to laugh at him; while his religion suffers by it, and the reputation of that is wounded through



through his side. We have need to pray that God will never leave us to ourselves, to say or do any thing which may make us a reproach to the foolish, Psal. xxxix. 8. (2.) As walking in the course of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners. He goes in company with the workers of iniquity, ver. 8. not that in his conversation he did associate with them, but in his opinion he did favour and countenance them, and strengthen their hands. If (as it follows, ver. 9. for the proof of this) *it profits a man nothing to delight himself in God*, why should he not lay the reins in the neck of his lusts, and herd himself with the workers of iniquity? He that saith, he hath cleansed his hands in vain, doth not only offend against the generation of God's children, Psal. lxxiii. 13, 14. but gratifies his enemies, and saith as they say.

10. Therefore, hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. 11. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. 12. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. 13. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world? 14. If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath: 15. All flesh shall perish together and man shall turn again unto dust.

The scope of Elihu's discourse is to reconcile Job to his affliction, and to pacify his spirit under them: In order to this he had shewed in the foregoing chapter that God meant him no hurt in afflicting him, but, intended it for his spiritual benefit. In this chapter he shews that he did him no wrong in afflicting him, nor punished him more than he deserved: If the former could not prevail to satisfy him, yet this ought to silence him. In these verses he directs his discourse to all the company; *Hearken to me ye men of understanding*; (ver. 10.) and shew yourselves to be intelligent by assenting to this which I say. And this is that which he saith, that the righteous God never did, or ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures, but his ways are equal, ours are unequal.

The truth here maintained, is the justice and equity of all God's proceedings. Now observe in these verses,

1. How plainly this truth is laid down, both negatively and positively. (1.) He doth wrong to none: *God cannot do wickedness, nor the Almighty commit iniquity*, ver. 10. It is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, and so it is also with the purity of his will, ver. 12. *God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment*. He neither can nor will do any thing ill, nor deal hardly with any man. He will never inflict the evil of punishment, but where he finds the evil of sin, nor in any undue proportion, for that would be to commit iniquity and do wickedly. If appeals be made to him, or he be to give a definitive sentence, he will have an eye to the merits of the cause, and not respect the person, for that were to pervert judgment. He will never either do any man wrong, or deny any man right, but *the heavens will shortly declare his righteousness*. Because he is God, and therefore is infinitely perfect and holy, he can neither do ill himself, nor countenance it in others, no more than he can either die, or lye, or deny himself. Though he be Almighty, yet he never useth his power, as mighty men often do, for the support of injustice. He is Shaddai, God all-sufficient, and therefore he cannot be tempted with evil, (James i. 13.) to do an unrighteous thing. (2.) He ministers justice to all, ver. 11. *The work of a man shall be rendered unto him*. Good works shall be rewarded, and evil works either punished or satisfied for; so that sooner or later, in this world or in that to come, he will cause every man to find according to his ways. This is the standing rule of distributive justice, to give to every man according to his work, *Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him*. If services persevered in now go unrewarded, and sins persisted in now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming, when God will fully render to every man according to his works, with interest for the delay.

2. How warmly it is asserted: (1.) With an assurance of the truth of it: *yea, surely*, ver. 12. It is a truth which none can deny or call in question, it is what we may take for granted and are all agreed in, that God will not do wickedly. (2.) With an abhorrence of the very thought of the contrary, ver. 10. *Far be it from God that he should do wickedness*, and from us that we should imagine such a thing, that we shall entertain the least suspicion of it, or say any thing that looks like charging him with it.

3. How evidently it is proved by two arguments.

1. His independent absolute sovereignty and dominion, ver. 13. *Who hath given him a charge over the earth*, and deputed him to manage the affairs of men upon the earth? Or, who but he hath disposed the whole world of mankind? He hath the sole administration of the kingdoms of men, and has it of himself, nor is he entrusted with it by or for any other. (1.) It is certain the government is his, and he doth according to his will in all the hosts both of heaven and earth; and therefore he is not to be charged with injustice; for *shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 25. How shall God either rule or judge the world, if there be or could be any unrighteousness with him? Rom. iii. 5, 6. He that is entitled to such an unlimited power, must certainly have in himself an unspotted purity. This is also a good reason why we should acquiesce in all God's dealings with us: Shall not he that disposeth of the whole world, dispose of us and our concerns? (2.) It is as certain that he doth not derive his power from any, nor is it a dispensation that is committed to him, but his power is original, and like his being of himself; and therefore, if he were not perfectly just, all the world and the affairs of it would soon be in the utmost confusion: The highest powers on earth have a God above them to whom they are accountable, because it is not far from them to do iniquity. But therefore God has none above him, because it is not possible he should do any thing (such is the perfection of his nature) that should need to be controlled. And if he be an absolute sovereign, we are bound to submit to him, for there is no higher power to which we may appeal, so that the virtue of a necessity.

2. His irresistible power, ver. 14. If he set his heart upon man; to contend with him, much more if (as some read it) he set his heart against man, to ruin him, if he should deal with man either by mere sovereignty, or by strict justice, (either by *summa potestas*, or *summum jus*) there were no standing before him; man's spirit and breath would be soon gone, and *all flesh would perish together*, ver. 15. Many men's honesty is owing purely to their impotency, they do not do wrong, because they cannot support it when it is done, or it is not in their power to do it: But God is able to crush any man easily and suddenly, and yet doth not by arbitrary power crush any man, which therefore must be attributed to the infinite perfection of his

nature, and that is immutable. See here, (1.) What God can do with us, he can soon bring us to dust, there needs not any positive act of omnipotence to do it, if he do not withdraw that concurrence of his providence by which we live, if he gathered unto himself that spirit and breath, which was from his hand at first, and is still in his hand, we expire immediately like an animal in an air-pump, when the air is exhausted. (2.) What he may do with us, without doing us any wrong: He may recall the being he gave, of which we are but tenants at will, and which also we have forfeited, and therefore as long as that is continued of his mere favour, we have no reason to cry out of wrong, whatever other comforts are removed.

16. If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words. 17. Shall even he that hateth right, govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just? 18. Is it fit to say to a king, *Thou art wicked?* and to princes, *Ye are ungodly?* 19. *How much less to him that accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?* for they all are the work of his hands. 20. In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand. 21. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his doings. 22. *There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves*. 23. For he will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God. 24. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number, and set others in their stead. 25. Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth them in the night, so that they are destroyed. 26. He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others: 27. Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways. 28. So that they caused the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted. 29. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only: 30. That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.

Elihu here applies himself more directly to Job: he had spoken to the rest, ver. 10. as men of understanding; now speaking to Job, he puts an if upon his understanding: *If thou hast understanding*, hear this and observe it, ver. 16.

1. Hear this, that God is not to be quarreled with for any thing that he doth: It is daring presumption to arraign and condemn God's proceedings, as Job had done by his discontents. It was, (1.) As absurd, as it would be to advance one to power that is a professed enemy to justice: *Shall even he that hateth right govern?* ver. 17. The righteous Lord so loveth righteousness, that in comparison with him, even Job himself, though a perfect and upright man, might be said to hate right, and shall he govern? Shall he pretend to direct God or correct what he doth? Shall such unrighteous creatures as we are, give law to the righteous God? Or, must he take his measures from us? When we consider the corruption of our nature, and the contrariety there is in us to the eternal rule of equity, we cannot but see it an impudent impious thing for us to prescribe to God. (2.) Is was as absurd, as it would be to call a most righteous innocent person to the bar, and to give judgement against him, though it appeared never so plain upon the trial that he was most just. *Wilt thou condemn him that is righteous in all his ways*, and cannot but be so? (3.) It is more absurd and unbecoming than it would be to say to a sovereign prince, *Thou art wicked*, and to judges upon the bench, *Ye are ungodly*, ver. 18. This would be looked upon as an insufferable affront to majesty and to majesty; no king, no prince, would bear it: In favour of government, we presume it is a right sentence that is passed, unless the contrary be very evident; but whatever we think, it is not fit to tell a king to his face that he is wicked: Nathan reproved David by a parable; or whatever a high-priest or a prophet might do, it is not for an ordinary subject to make so bold with the powers that are: How absurd is it then to say so to God! To impute iniquity to him, who having no respect to persons, is in no temptation to do an unjust thing? ver. 19. *He regardeth not the rich more than the poor*, and therefore it is fit he should rule, and it is not fit we should find fault with him. Note, Rich and poor stand upon the same level before God: A great man shall fare never the better, nor find any favour for his wealth and greatness; nor shall a poor man fare ever the worse for his poverty, nor an honest cause be starved: Job now he was poor, should have as much favour with God, and be as much regarded by him as when he was rich; for they all are the work of his hands; Their persons are so; the poor are made by the same hand, and of the same mould with the rich: Their conditions are so; the poor were made poor by the divine providence, as well as the rich made rich; and therefore the poor shall fare never the worse for that which is their lot, not their fault.

2. Hear this, that God is to be acknowledged and submitted to in all that he doth. Divers considerations Elihu here suggests to Job, to beget in him great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him to knock under, and proceed no further in his quarrel with him.

1. God is almighty, and able to deal with the strongest of men, when he enters into judgment with them, ver. 20. even the people, the body of a nation, though never so numerous, shall be troubled, unhinged and put into disorder, when God pleaseth; even the mighty man, the prince, though never so honourable, never so formidable among men, yet if God speak the word shall be taken away out of his throne; nay, out of the land of the living; they shall die, they shall pass away: What cannot he do that has all the powers of death at his command? Observe the suddenness of this destruction, *In a moment shall they die*. It is not a work of time with God to bring down his proud enemies, but when he pleaseth it is soon done; nor is he bound to give them warning, no not an hour's warning; *This night thy soul shall be required*. Observe the reason of it, they shall be troubled at midnight, when they are secure and careless, and unable to help themselves; as the Egyptians when their first-born were slain. And this is the immediate work of God, they are taken away, without hand, insensibly, by secret judgments; God can himself humble the greatest tyrant, without



the assistance or agency of any man: Whatever hand he sometimes useth in the accomplishing of his purposes, he needs none, but can do it without hand. Nor is it one single mighty man only that he can thus overpower, but even hosts of them, *ver. 24. He shall break in pieces mighty men without number*: for no combined power can stand it out against omnipotence: Yet when God destroys tyranny, he doth not design anarchy; if those are brought down that ruled ill, it doth not therefore follow that people must have no rulers, for when he breaks mighty men, yet he sets others in their stead, that rule better; or if they do not, he overturns them also in the night, or in a night, so that they are destroyed, *ver. 25. Witness Belshazzar*. Or, if he designs them space to repent, he doth not presently destroy them, but *he strikes them as wicked men*, *ver. 26*. Some humbling mortifying judgments are brought upon them; these wicked rulers are stricken as other wicked men; as surely, as sorely stricken in their bodies, estates or families, and this for warning to their neighbours; the stroke is given *in terrorem*, and therefore is given in the open sight of others, that they also may see and fear, and tremble before the justice of God. If kings stand not before him how shall we stand!

2. God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. As the strongest cannot oppose his arm, so the most subtle cannot escape his eye; and therefore if some are punished, either more or less than we think they should be, instead of quarrelling with God, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God only. For, (1.) Every thing is open before him, *ver. 22. His eyes are upon the ways of man*: Not only they are within reach of his eye, so that he can see them, but his eye is upon them, so that he actually observes and inspects them; he sees us all, and sees all our goings; go whither we will we are under his eye; all our actions good and evil, are regarded and recorded, and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened. (2.) Nothing is or can be concealed from him, *ver. 22. There is no darkness nor shadow of death*, so close, so thick, so solitary, so remote from light or sight, as that in it the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from the discovering eye and avenging hand of the righteous God. Observe here, (1.) The workers of iniquity would hide themselves if they could, from the eye of the world for shame, and that perhaps they may do from the eye of God for fear, as Adam among the trees of the garden; the day is coming when mighty men, and chief captains, will call to the rocks and mountains to hide them. (2.) They would gladly be hid even by the shadow of death, be hid in the grave, and lie for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. (3.) It is in vain to think of flying from God's justice, or absconding when his wrath is in pursuit of us. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God; *He knows their works*, *ver. 25*, both what they do, and what they design.

3. God is righteous, and in all his proceedings goes according to the rules of equity. Even then when he is overturning mighty men, and breaking them in pieces, yet *he will not lay upon man more than right*, *ver. 23*. As he will not punish the innocent, so he will not exact of those that are guilty more than their iniquities deserve; and of the proportion between the sin and the punishment infinite wisdom shall be the judge. He will not give any man cause to complain that he deals hardly with him, nor shall any man enter into judgment with God, or bring an action against him. If he do, God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. Therefore Job was very much to be blamed for his complaints of God, and is here well advised to let fall his action, for he would certainly be cast, or nonsuited. *It is not for man ever to purpose to enter into judgment with the omnipotent*; so some read the whole verse. Job had often wished to plead his cause before God. To what purpose, saith Elihu? the judgment already given concerning thee will certainly be affirmed; no errors can be found in it, nor any exceptions taken to it, but after all, it must rest as it is. All is well that God doth, and will be found so.

To prove that God when he destroys the mighty men, and strikes them as wicked men, yet doth not lay upon them more than right, he shews what their wickedness was, *ver. 27, 28*, and let any compare that with their punishment, and then judge whether they did not deserve it. In short, these unjust judges whom God will justly judge, neither feared God, nor regarded man, *Luke xviii. 2*. (1.) They were rebels to God; they turned back from him, cast off the fear of him, and abandoned the very thoughts of him, for they would not consider any of his ways, took no heed either to his precepts or to his providences, but lived without God in the world. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, they turn back from God; and it is because they do not consider, not because they cannot, but they will not. From inconsideration come impiety, and from thence all immorality. (2.) They were tyrants to all mankind, *ver. 28*. They will not call upon God for themselves; but they cause the cry of the poor to come to him, and that cry is against them. They are injurious and oppressive to the poor, wrong them, crush them, impoverish them yet more, and add affliction to the afflicted, who cry unto God and make their complaint to him, and hears them, and pleads their cause. Their case is bad that have the prayers and tears of the poor against them, for the cry of the oppressed will sooner or later draw down vengeance on the heads of the oppressors, and no one can say that this is more than right, *Exod. xxii. 23*.

4. God hath an uncontrollable dominion in all the affairs of the children of men, and so guides and governs whatever concerns both communities and particular persons, that as what he designs cannot be defeated, so what he doth cannot be change, *ver. 29*. Observe, (1.) The frowns of all the world cannot trouble them whom God quiets with his smiles. When he giveth quietness, who can then make trouble? Which is a challenge to all the powers of hell and earth to disquiet those to whom God speaks peace, and for whom he createth it. If God give outward peace to a nation, he can secure what he gives, and disable the enemies of it to give it any disturbance. If God give inward peace to a man only, that quietness and everlasting assurance, which is the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan, nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor the arrests of death itself can give trouble. What can make them uneasy whose souls dwell at ease in God? See *Phil. iv. 7*. (2.) The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with his frowns; For if he in displeasure hide his face, and withhold the comfort of his favour, who then can behold him? i. e. Who can behold a displeased God so as to bear up under his wrath, or turn it away? Who can make him shew his face when he resolves to hide it, or sees through the clouds and darkness which are round about him? Or, who can behold a disquieted sinner so as to give him effectual relief? Who can stand a friend to him to whom God is an enemy? None can relieve the distresses of the outward condition without God: *If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I?* *2 Kings vi. 27*. Nor can any relieve the distresses of the mind against God and his terrors. If he impress the sense of his wrath upon a guilty conscience, all the comfort the creature can administer are ineffectual, as vinegar upon nitre, so are songs to a heavy heart. The irresistableness of God's operations must be acknowledged in his dealings, both with communities and with particular persons: What he doth cannot be controlled, whether it be done against a nation in its public capacity, or against a man only in his private affair: The same providence

that governs mighty kingdoms, presides in the concerns of the meanest individual. And neither the strength of a whole nation can resist his power, nor the smallness of a single person evade his cognizance; but what he doth shall be done effectually and victoriously.

5. God is wise and careful of the public welfare, and therefore provides that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared, *ver. 30*. See here, (1.) The pride of hypocrites; they aim to reign; the praise of men and power in the world is their reward; it is what they aim at. (2.) The policy of tyrants; when they aim to set up themselves, they sometimes make use of religion as a cloke and cover for their ambition, and by their hypocrisy come to reign. (3.) The danger the people are in when hypocrites reign; they are likely to be ensnared in sin or trouble, or both. Power in the hands of dissemblers is often destructive to the rights and liberties of a people, which they are more easily wheedled out of, than forced out of. And a great deal of mischief has been done likewise to the power of godliness under the pretence of a form of godliness. (4.) The care which divine providence takes of the people to prevent this danger, that the hypocrite reign not; either that he doth not reign at all, or that he do not reign long. If God has mercy in store for a people, he will either prevent the rise, or hasten the ruin of hypocritical rulers.

31. Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more. 32. That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. 33. Should it be according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse or whether thou choose, and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest. 34. Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wise man hearken unto me. 35. Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom. 36. My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end, because of his answers for wicked men. 37. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.

In these verses,

1. Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction, *ver. 31, 32*. Having reproved him for his peevish passionate words, here he puts better words into his mouth: When we reprove for what is amiss, we must direct to what is good: These are reproofs of instruction, *Prov. vi. 25*. He doth not impose it upon Job to use these words, but recommends it to him, as that which was meet to be said. And in general he would have him repeat of his ill carriage and indecent expressions under his affliction. Job's other friends would have had him own himself an ill man, and by overdoing they undid: Elihu will oblige him only to own that he had in the management of this controversy spoken unadvisedly with his lips: Let us remember this in giving reproofs, and not make the matter worse than it is; for the stretching of the crime may defeat the prosecution: Elihu drives the right nail, and speeds accordingly. He directs Job.

(1.) To humble himself before God for his sins, and to accept the punishment of them. I have borne chastisement. What I suffer comes justly upon me, and therefore I will bear it, and not only justify God in it, but acknowledge his goodness. Many are chastised that do not bear chastisement, do not bear it well, and so in effect do not bear it at all. Penitents, if sincere, will take all well that God doth, and will bear chastisement as a medicinal operation intended for good.

(2.) To pray to God to discover his sins to him, *ver. 32. That which I see not, teach thou me*. Lord, upon the review, I find much amiss in me, and much done amiss by me, but I have reason to fear there is much more that I am not aware of; greater abominations, which through ignorance, mistake, and partiality to myself, I do not yet see; Lord, give me to see it, awaken my conscience to do its office faithfully. A good man is willing to know the worst by himself, and particularly under affliction desires to be told wherefore God contends with him, and what God designs in correcting him.

(3.) To promise reformation, *ver. 31. I will not offend any more*. And *ver. 32. If I have done any iniquity, (or seeing I have) I will do so no more*; whatever thou shalt discover to me to have been amiss, by thy grace I will amend it for the future. This implies a confession that we have offended: True remorse and godly sorrow for the offence, and a humble compliance with God's design in afflicting us, which is to part between us and our sins. The penitent here completes his repentance, for it is not enough to be sorry for our sins, but we must go and sin no more, and as here bind ourselves with the bond of a fixed resolution never more to return to folly. This is meet to be said in a steadfast purpose, and meet to be said to God in a solemn promise and vow.

2. He reasons with him concerning his discontent and uneasiness under his affliction, *ver. 33*. We are ready to think every thing that concerns us should be just as we would have it; but Elihu here shews, (1.) That it is absurd and unreasonable to expect it: Should it be according to thy mind? No, what reason for that? Elihu here speaks with great deference to the divine will and wisdom, and a satisfaction therein: It is highly fit every thing should be according to God's mind; and with a just disdain of the pretensions of those that are proud, and would be their own carvers: Should it be according to thy mind? Must we always have the good we have a mind to enjoy, we should then wrongfully encroach upon others, and foolishly ensnare ourselves: Must we never be afflicted because we have no mind to it? Is it fit that sinners should feel no smart, that scholars should be under no discipline? Or if we must be afflicted is it fit we should choose what rod we will be beaten with? No, it is fit every thing should be according to God's mind, and not ours, for he is the creator, and we are the creatures; he is infinitely wise and knowing, we are foolish and short-sighted; he is in one mind, we are in many. (2.) That it is in vain, and to no purpose to expect it. He will recompense it whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose: God will take his own way, fulfil his own counsel, and recompense according to the sentence of his own justice, whether thou art pleased or displeased he will neither ask thy leave, nor ask thy advice, but what he pleaseth that will he do; it is therefore thy wisdom to be easy, and make a virtue of necessity: Make the best of that which is, because it is out of thy power to make it otherwise. If thou pretend to choose and refuse, i. e. to prescribe to God, and except against what he doth, so will not I, I will acquiesce in all he doth; and therefore speak what thou knowest, say what thou wilt do, whether thou wilt oppose or submit. The matter lies plain before thee; be at a point: thou art in God's hand, whether there was not a great deal of sin and folly in that which Job said. (1.) He would have



have the matter thoroughly examined and brought to an issue, *ver. 36. My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end.* If any will undertake to justify what he has said, let them do it; if not, let us all agree to bear our testimony against it. Many understand it of his trial by afflictions, let his troubles be continued till he be thoroughly humbled, and his proud spirit brought down, till he be made to see his error, and to retract what he hath so presumptuously said against God and his providence. Let the trial be continued till the end be obtained. (2.) He appeals both to God and man, and desires the judgment of both upon it. 1. Some read, *ver. 36. as an appeal to God, O my Father, let Job be tried.* So the margin of our bibles, for the same word signifies my desire and my father: And some suppose he lifted up his eyes when he said this, meaning, *O my Father, which art in heaven*, let Job be tried till he be subdued. When we are praying for the benefit of afflictions either to ourselves or others, we must eye God as a father, because they are fatherly corrections, and a part of our filial education, *Heb. xii. 7.* 2. He appeals to the bye-standers, *ver. 34. Let men of understanding tell me*, whether they can put any more favourable construction upon Job's words than I have put, and whether he has not spoken very ill, and ought not to cry *peccavi*. In what Job had said, he thought it appeared, (1.) That he did not rightly understand himself, but had talked foolishly, *ver. 35.* He cannot say that Job is without knowledge and wisdom, but in this matter he hath spoken without knowledge, and whatever his heart is, his words were without prudence. What he said to his wife may be retorted upon himself; *He speaks as one of the foolish men speak*, and for the same reason *shall we not receive evil as well as good* at God's hand? *chap. ii. 10.* Sometimes we need and deserve those reproofs ourselves which we have given to others. Those that reproach God's wisdom, really reproach their own. (2.) That he had not a due regard to God, but had talked wickedly. If what he has said he tried to the end, *i. e.* if one would put it to the utmost stretch, and make the worst of it, it would be found, (1.) That he had taken part with God's enemies: His answers were for wicked men, *i. e.* what he had said tended to strengthen the hands and harden the hearts of wicked people in their wickedness, he having carried the matter of their prosperity much farther than he needed. Let wicked men, like Balaam, plead for themselves if they will, but far be it from us that we should answer for them, or say any thing in favour of them. (2.) That he had insulted God's friends, and heaped reproaches upon them. *He clappeth his hands among us*, and if he be not thoroughly tried and humbled will grow yet more insolent and imperious, as if he had gotten the day and silenced us all. To speak ill is bad enough, but to clap our hands and triumph in it when we have done, as if error and passion had won the victory, is much worse. (3.) That he spoke against God himself, and by standing to what he had said, added rebellion to sin. To speak, though but one word against God, by whom we speak, and for whom we ought to speak, is a great sin; what is it then to multiply words against him, as if we would out-talk him? What is it to repeat them instead of unsaying them? those that have sinned, and when they are called to repent thus go on forwardly, add rebellion to their sin, and make it exceedingly sinful. *Errare possum, Hæreticus esse nolo.*

## C H A P. XXXV.

*Job being silent, Elihu follows his blow, and here a third time undertakes to shew him that he had spoken amiss, and ought to recant. Three ill sayings he here chargeth him with, and returns answer to them distinctly. (1.) He had represented religion as an indifferent, unprofitable thing, which God enjoins for his own sake, not for ours; the contrary to which Elihu makes out, ver. 1-8. (2.) He had complained of God as deaf to the cries of the oppressed, against which imputation Elihu here justifies God, ver. 9-13. (3.) He had despaired of the return of God's favour to him, because it was so long deferred, but Elihu shews him the true cause of the delay, ver. 14-16.*

**E**LIHU spake moreover, and said, 2. Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's? 3. For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee, and, what profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin? 4. I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee. 5. Look unto the heavens, and see and behold the clouds, which are higher than thou. 6. If thou sinnest, what doth it thee against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? 7. If thou be righteous, what giveth thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? 8. Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.

We have here,

1. The bad words which Elihu chargeth upon Job, *ver. 2, 3.* To evince the badness of them, he appeals to himself and his own sober thoughts in the reflection; *Thinkest thou this to be right?* This intimates, (1.) Elihu's confidence that the reproof he now gave was just, for he could refer the judgment of it even to Job himself. They that have truth and equity on their side sooner or later, will have every man's conscience on their side. (2.) His good opinion of Job, that he thought better than he spoke, and that though he had spoken amiss, yet when he perceived his mistake, he would not stand to it. What we have said in our haste that was not right, it becomes us to own that our second thoughts convince us that it was wrong.

Two things Elihu here reproves Job for:

(1.) For *justifying himself more than God*, which was the thing that first provoked him, *chap. xxxii.* 2. Thou hast in effect said, *My righteousness is more than God's*, *i. e.* I have done more for God than ever he did for me; so that when the accounts are balanced, he will be brought in debtor to me: As if Job thought his services had been paid less than they deserved, and his sins punished more than they deserved; which is a most unjust and wicked thought for any man to harbour, and especially to utter. When Job insisted so much upon his own integrity, and the severity of God's dealings with him, he did in effect say, *My righteousness is more than God's*; whereas, though we be never so good, and our afflictions never so great, we are chargeable with unrighteousness, and God is not.

(2.) For disowning the benefits and advantages of religion, because he suffers these things. *What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin?* *ver. 3.* This is gathered from *chap. ix. 30, 31. Though I make my hands*

*never so clean, what the nearer am I? Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch.* And *chap. x. 15. If I be wicked, woe to me*; but if I be righteous, it is all one. The psalmist, when he compared his own afflictions with the prosperity of the wicked, was tempted to say, *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain*, *Psalm lxxiii. 13.* And if Job said so, he did in effect say, *My righteousness is more than God's*, *ver. 2.* for if he got nothing by his religion, God was more beholden to him than he was to God. But though there might be some colour for it, yet it was not fair to charge these words upon Job, when he himself had made them the wicked words of prospering sinners, *chap. xxi. 15. What profit shall we have if we pray to him?* and had immediately disclaimed them, *ver. 16. The counsel of the wicked is far from me.* It is not a fair way of disputing, to charge men with those consequences of their opinions which they expressly renounce.

2. The good answer which Elihu gives to this, *ver. 4.* I will undertake to answer thee, and thy companions with thee, *i. e.* all those that approve thy sayings, and are ready to justify thee in them; and all others that say as thou sayest: I have that to offer which will silence them all. To do this he has recourse to his old maxim, *chap. xxxiii. 12. That God is greater than man.* That is a truth, which if duly improved will serve many good purposes, and this particularly to prove that God is debtor to no man. The greatest of men may be a debtor to the meanest, but such is the infinite disproportion between God and man, that the great God cannot possibly receive any benefit by man, and therefore cannot be supposed to lie under any obligation to man; for if he be obliged by his promise and promise, it is only to himself. That is a challenge which no man can take up, *Rom. xi. 35. Who hath first given to God, let him prove it, and it shall be recompensed to him again.* Why should we demand it, as a just debt to gain by our religion, (as Job seemed to do) when the God we serve doth not gain by it?

1. Elihu needs not prove that God is above man; it is agreed by all, but he endeavours to affect Job and us with it, by an ocular demonstration of the height of the heavens and the clouds, *ver. 5.* They are far above us, and God is far above them; how much then is he set out of the reach either of our sins or of our services! *Look unto the heavens, and behold the clouds.* God made man to look upwards; *Caelumque tuum jussit.* Idolaters looked up to heaven, and worshipped the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon and stars; but we must look up to heaven, and worship the Lord of those hosts. They are higher than we, but God is infinitely above them. His glory is above the heavens, *Psalm viii. 1.* and the knowledge of him higher than heaven, *Job xi. 8.*

2. But from hence he infers that God is not affected, either one way or other, by any thing that we do.

1. He owns that men may be either bettered or damaged by what we do, *ver. 8. Thy wickedness, perhaps may, hurt a man as thou art*, may occasion him trouble in his outward concerns; a wicked man may wound, or rob or slander his neighbour, or may draw him into sin, and so prejudice his soul: Thy righteousness, thy justice, thy charity, thy wisdom, thy piety, may perhaps profit the son of man. our goodness extends to the saints that are in the earth, *Psalm xvi. 3.* To men like ourselves, we are in a capacity either of doing injury or of shewing kindness. And in both these the sovereign Lord and Judge of all will interest himself, will reward those that do good, and punish those that do hurt to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects: But,

2. He utterly denies that God can really be either prejudiced or advantaged by what any, even the greatest of all the men of the East do, or can do.

1. The sins of the worst of sinners are no damage to him, *ver. 6. If thou sinnest wilfully and of malice prepense, and designedly against him with a high hand, may, if thy transgression be multiplied*, and the acts of sin be never so often repeated, yet what dost thou against him? This is a challenge to the carnal mind, and deters the most daring sinner to do his worst. It speaks much of the greatness and glory of God, that it is not in the power of his worst enemies to do him any real prejudice. Sin is said to be against God, because so the sinner intends it, and so he takes it, and it is an injury to his honour, yet it cannot do any thing against him: The malice of sinners is impotent malice: It cannot destroy his being or perfections, cannot dethrone him from his power and dominion, cannot diminish his wealth and possessions, cannot disturb his peace and repose, cannot defeat his counsels and designs, nor cannot derogate from his essential glory. Job therefore did ill to say, *What profit is it that I am cleansed from my sin?* God was no gainer by his reformation, and then who should gain if he himself did not?

2. The services of the best saints are no profit to him, *ver. 7. If thou be righteous what givest thou him?* He needs not our service: Or if he did want to have the work done, he has better hands than ours at command. Our religion brings no accession at all to his felicity: He is so far from being beholden to us, that we are beholden to him for making us righteous, and accepting our righteousness: and therefore we can demand nothing from him, nor have any reason to complain if we have not what we expect, but to be thankful that we have better than we deserve.

9. By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. 10. But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night? 11. Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven. 12. There they cry (but none giveth answer) because of the pride of evil men. 13. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

Elihu here returns answer to another word that Job had said, which he thought reflected much upon the justice and goodness of God, and therefore ought not to pass without a remark. Observe,

1. What it was that Job complained of: It was this; That God did not regard the cries of the oppressed against their oppressors, *ver. 9. By reason of the multitude of oppressions*, the many hardships which proud tyrants put upon poor people, and the barbarous usage they give them, they make the oppressed to cry, but to no purpose. God doth not appear to right them: They cry out, they cry on still by reason of the arm of the mighty, which lies heavy upon them. This seems to refer to those words of Job, *chap. xxiv. 12. Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out against the oppressors, yet God layeth not folly to them*, doth not reckon with them for it. This is a thing that Job knows not what to make of, nor how to reconcile to the justice of God and his government. *Is there a righteous God, and can it be he should so slowly bear, so slowly see?*

2. How Elihu solves the difficulty: if the cries of the oppressed be not heard



heard, the fault is not in God; he is ready to hear and help them, but the fault is in themselves: *They ask and have not, but it is because they ask amiss*, James iv. 3. *They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty*, but it is a complaining cry, a wailing cry, not a penitent praying cry, the cry of nature and passion, not of grace. See *Hos. vii. 14. They have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds*: And how can we expect then that they should be answered and relieved?

1. They do not enquire after God, nor seek to acquaint themselves with him under their affliction, *ver. 10. But none saith, where is God my maker?* Afflictions are sent to direct and quicken us to enquire early after God, *Psal. lxxviii. 34.* But many that groan under great oppressions, never mind God nor take notice of his hand in their troubles; if they did they would bear their troubles more patiently, and be much bettered by them. Of the many that are afflicted and oppressed, few get the good they might get by their affliction: It should drive them to God, but how seldom doth it so? It is a piteous thing to see so little religion among the poor and miserable part of mankind: every one complains of his troubles: *but none saith, where is God my maker?* i. e. none repent of their sins, none return to him that smiteth them, none seek the face and favour of God, and that comfort in him which would balance their outward afflictions; They are wholly taken up with the calamitousness of their condition, as if that would excuse them in living without God in the world, which should engage them to cleave the more closely to him. Observe, (1.) God is our maker, the author of our being, and under that notion it concerns us to regard and remember him, *Eccles. xii. 1. God my makers* in the plural number; which some think is, if not an indication, yet an intimation of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; *Let us make man.* (2.) It is our duty therefore to enquire after him: Where is he that we may pay our homage to him, may own our dependence upon him, and obligations to him? Where is he that we may apply ourselves to him for maintenance and protection, may receive law from him, and may seek our happiness in his favour, from whose power we received our being? (3.) It is to be lamented, that he is so little enquired after by the children of men: All are asking where is mirth, and where is wealth, and where is a good bargain; but none ask, *Where is God my maker?*

2. They do not take notice of the mercies they enjoy in and under their afflictions, nor are thankful for them, and therefore cannot expect that God should deliver them out of their afflictions. (1.) He provides for our inward comfort and joy under our outward troubles, and we ought to make use of that, and wait his time for the removal of our troubles. *He giveth songs in the night*, i. e. when our condition is never so dark, and sad, and melancholy, there is that in God, in his providence and promise, which is sufficient not only to support us, but to fill us with joy and consolation, and enable us in every thing to give thanks, and even to rejoice in tribulation: When we only pore upon the afflictions we are under, and neglect the consolations of God which are treasured up for us, it is just with God to reject our prayers. (2.) He preserves to us the use of our reason and understanding, *ver. 11. Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth*, i. e. who has endued us with more noble powers and faculties than they are endued with, and hath made us capable of more excellent enjoyments, and employments here and for ever. Now this comes in here, (1.) As that which furnisheth us with matter for thanksgiving, even under the heaviest burden of affliction. Whatever we are deprived of, we have our immortal souls, those jewels, more worth than all the world, continued to us, and even those that kill the body, cannot hurt them. And if our affliction prevail not to disturb the exercise of our faculties, but we enjoy the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences, we have a great deal of reason to be thankful, how pressing soever our calamities otherwise are. 2. As a reason why we should under our afflictions enquire after God our maker, and seek unto him. This is the greatest excellency of reason that it makes us capable of religion, and it is in that especially that we are taught more than the beasts and the fowls. They have wonderful instincts and sagacities in seeking out their food, their physic, their shelter; but none of them are capable of enquiring, *Where is God my maker?* Something like logic, and philosophy, and politics, have been observed among the brute creatures, but never any thing of divinity or religion: these are peculiar to man: If therefore the oppressed only cry *by reason of the arm of the mighty*, and do not look up to God, they do no more than the brutes, who complain when they are hurt, and forget that instruction and wisdom by which they are advanced so far above them. God relieves the brute creatures because they cry to him according to the best of their capacity. *Psal. civ. 21. Job xxxviii. 41.* But what reason have men to expect relief, who are capable of enquiring after God as their maker, and yet cry to him no otherwise than as brutes do?

3. They are proud and unhumiliated under their afflictions, which were sent to mortify them, and to hide pride from them, *ver. 12. There they cry*, there they lie exclaiming against their oppressors, and filling the ears of all about them with their complaints, not sparing to reflect upon God himself and his providence, but none giveth answer: God doth not work deliverance for them, and perhaps men do not much regard them, and why so? It is because of the pride of evil men: they are evil men; they regard iniquity in their hearts, and therefore God will not hear their prayers, *Psal. lxxvi. 18. Isa. i. 11. God heareth not such sinners.* They have, it may be, brought themselves into trouble by their own wickedness, they are the devil's poor, and then who can pity them? Yet this is not all; they are proud still, therefore they do not seek unto God, *Psal. x. 4.* Or if they do cry unto him, therefore he doth not give answer, for he hears only the desire of the humble. *Psal. x. 17.* and delivers those by his providence whom he hath first by his grace prepared and made fit for deliverance, and that we are not, if under humbling afflictions our hearts remain unhumiliated, and pride unmortified. The case is plain, then, if we cry to God for the removal of the oppression and affliction we are under, and it is not removed, the reason is not because the Lord's hand is shortened, or his ear heavy, because the affliction has not done its work, we are not sufficiently humbled, and therefore must thank ourselves that it is continued.

4. They are not sincere and upright, and inward with God in their supplications to him, and therefore he doth not hear and answer them, *ver. 13. God will not hear vanity*, i. e. the hypocritical prayer, which is a vain prayer, coming out of feigned lips. It is a vanity to think that God should hear it who searcheth the heart, and requires truth in the inward part.

14. Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him, therefore trust thou in him. 15. But now because it is not so, he hath visited in his anger, yet he knoweth it not in greater extremity: 16. Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain: he multiplieth words without knowledge.

Here is, 1. Another ill word for which Elihu reproves Job, *ver. 14. Thou sayest thou shalt not see him*; i. e. (1.) Thou complaineest that thou dost not understand the meaning of his severe dealings with thee, nor discern the drift and design of them, *chap. xxiii. 8, 9.* And, (2.) Thou despairest of seeing his gracious returns to thee, of seeing better days again, and art ready to give up all for gone, as *Hzekiah, chap. xxxviii. 11. I shall not see the Lord.* As when we are in prosperity, we are ready to think our mountain shall never be brought low; so when we are in adversity, we are ready to think our valley will never be filled, but in both to conclude, that *to-morrow must be as this day*, which is as absurd as to think that the weather, when it is either fair or foul, will be always so, that the flowing tide will always flow, or the ebbing tide will always ebb.

2. The answer which Elihu gives to this despairing word that Job had said, which is this,

1. That when he looked up to God, he had no just reason to speak thus despairingly: For judgment is before him, i. e. He knows what he has to do, and will do all in infinite wisdom, and justice: he has the entire plan and model of providence before him, and knows what he will do, which we do not, and therefore understand not what he doth. There is a day of judgment before him, when all the seeming disorders of providence will be set to rights, and the dark chapters of it will be expounded: Then thou shalt see the full meaning of these dark events, and the final period of these dismal prospects; then thou shalt see his face with joy; therefore trust in him, depend upon him, wait for him, and believe that the issue will be good at last. When we consider that God is infinitely wise and righteous, and faithful, and that he is a God of judgment, (*Isa. xxx. 18.*) we shall see no reason to despair of relief from him, but all the reason in the world to hope in him, that it will come in due time, in the best time.

2. That if he had not yet seen an end of his troubles, the reason was because he did not thus trust in God, and wait for him, *ver. 15. Because it is not so*; because thou dost not trust in him, therefore the affliction which came at first from love, has now displeasure mixed with it: Now God hath visited thee in his anger, taking it very ill that thou canst not find in thy heart to trust in him, but harbourst such hard misgiving thoughts of him. If there be any mixtures of divine wrath in our afflictions, we may thank ourselves, it is because we do not carry ourselves aright under them, we quarrel with God, are fretful and impatient, and distrustful of the divine providence. This was Job's case; *The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord*, *Prov. xix. 3.* yet Elihu thinks that Job being in great extremity, did not know and consider that as he should, that it is his own fault that he is not yet delivered.

He concludes therefore that *Job opens his mouth in vain*, *ver. 16. viz.* in complaining of his grievances, and crying for redress, or in justifying himself, and clearing up his own innocence; it is all in vain, because he doth not trust in God, and wait for him, and had not a due regard to him in his afflictions. He had said a great deal, had multiplied words, but all without knowledge; all to no purpose, because he did not encourage himself in God, and humble himself before him. It is in vain for us either to appeal to God, or to acquit ourselves, if we do not study to answer the end for which affliction is sent; and in vain to pray for relief if we do not trust in God, for let not that man that distrusts God, think that he shall receive any thing from him, *James i. 7.* Or this may refer to all that Job had said. Having shewed the absurdity of some passages in his discourse, he concludes, there were many other passages that were in like manner the fruits of his ignorance and mistake. He did not, as his other friends, condemn him for an hypocrite, but charged him only with Moses's sin, *speaking unadvisedly with his lips*, when his spirit was provoked: And when at any time we do so, (and who is there that offends not in word?) it is a mercy to be told of it, and we must take it patiently and kindly as Job did; not repeating but recanting what we have said amiss.

## C H A P. XXXVI

Elihu having largely reproved Job for some of his unadvised speeches, which Job had nothing to say in the vindication of, here comes more generally to set him to rights in his notions of God's dealings with him. His other friends had stood to it, that because he was a wicked man, therefore his afflictions were so great and so long; Elihu saith, No, the affliction was sent for his trial, and therefore it was lengthened out because Job was not as yet thoroughly humbled under it, nor had duly accommodated himself to it. And many reasons he urgeth, taken from the wisdom and righteousness of God, his care of his people, and especially his greatness and almighty power, with which in this and the following chapter, he persuades him to submit to the hand of God. Here we have (1.) His preface, *ver. 2—4.* (2.) The account he gives of the method of God's providences towards the children of men, according as they carry themselves, *ver. 5—15.* (3.) The fair warning and good counsel he gives to Job thereupon, *ver. 16—21.* (4.) His demonstration of God's sovereignty and omnipotence, which he gives instances of in the operations of common providence, and which is a reason why we should all submit to him in his dealings with us, *ver. 22—33.* This he prosecutes and enlarges upon in the following chapter.

1. ELIHU also proceeded, and said. 2. Suffer me a little and I will shew thee, that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. 3. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. 4. For truly my words shall not be false; he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.

Once more Elihu begs the patience of the auditory, and Job's particularly, for he has not said all he has to say, but will have done presently, *Stand about me a little*; so some read it, *ver. 2.* Let me have your attendance, your attention a while longer, and I will speak but this once, as plainly and as much to the purpose as I can. To gain this he pleads,

1. That he had a good cause, a noble subject, and a very fruitful one. I have yet to speak on God's behalf. He spoke as an advocate for God, and therefore might justly expect the ear of the court. Some indeed pretend to speak on God's behalf that really speak for themselves, but those who sincerely appear in the cause of God, and speak in behalf of his honour, his truths, his ways, his people, they shall be sure neither to want instructions (*It shall be given them in that same hour what they shall speak*) nor to lose their cause, nor to lose their fee. Nor need they fear the exhausting of their subject: They that have spoken never so much, may yet find more to be spoken on God's behalf.

2. That



2. That he had something to offer that was uncommon, and out of the road of vulgar observation. *I will fetch my knowledge from afar*, ver. 3. i.e. we will have recourse to our first principles, and the highest notions we can make use of to serve any purpose. It is worth while to go far for this knowledge of God, to dig for it, to travel for it, it will recompence our pains, and though far fetched is not dear bought.

3. That his design was undeniably honest; for all he aimed at was to ascribe righteousness to his Maker; to maintain and clear this truth, that God is righteous in all his ways. In speaking of God and speaking for him, it is good to remember that he is our Maker, to call him so, and therefore to be ready to do him and the interests of his kingdom the best service we can. If he be our Maker, we have our all from him, must use our all for him, be very jealous for his honour.

4. That his management should be very just and fair, ver. 4. *My words shall not be false*, neither disagreeable to the thing itself, nor to my own thoughts and apprehensions. It is truth I am contending for, and that for truth's sake, with all possible sincerity and plainness: He will make use of plain and solid arguments, and not the subtilties and niceties of the schools: He that is perfect or upright in knowledge is now reasoning with thee, and therefore let him not only have a fair hearing, but let what he saith be taken in good part as meant well. The perfection of our knowledge in this world is to be honest and sincere in searching out truth, in applying it to ourselves, and in making use of what we know for the good of others.

5. Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom. 6. He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor. 7. He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne: yea, he doth establish them forever, and they are exalted. 8. And if they be bound in fetters and be holden in cords of affliction: 9. Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. 10. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from their iniquity. 11. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. 12. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge. 13. But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them. 14. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.

Elihu being to speak on God's behalf, and particularly to ascribe righteousness to his deliverer, here shews, that the disposals of divine providence are all of them, not only according to the eternal counsels of his will, but according to the eternal rules of equity. God acts as a righteous governor. For,

1. He doth not think it below him to take notice of the meanest of his subjects, nor doth poverty or obscurity set any at a distance from his favour. If men are mighty, they are apt to look with a haughty disdain upon those that are not of distinction, and make no figure; but God is mighty, infinitely so, and yet he despiseth not any, ver. 6. He humbleth himself to take cognizance of the affairs of the meanest, to do them justice, and to shew them kindness. Job thought himself and his cause slighted, because God did not presently appear for him. No, saith Elihu. God despiseth not any; which is a good reason why we should honour all men. He is mighty in strength and wisdom, and yet doth not look with contempt upon those that have but a little strength and wisdom if they but mean honestly. Nay, therefore he despiseth not any, because his wisdom and strength are inconceivably infinite, and therefore the condescensions of his grace can be no diminution to him. They that are wise and good will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

2. He gives no countenance to the greatest if they be bad, ver. 6. *He preserveth not the life of the wicked*. Though their life may be prolonged, yet not under any special care of the divine providence, but only the common protection of it. Job had said, that the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power, Job xxi. 7. No, saith Elihu, he seldom suffers wicked men to become old. He preserveth not their life so long as they expected, nor with that comfort and satisfaction which is indeed our life: and their preservation is but a reservation for the day of wrath, Rom. ii. 5.

3. He is always ready to right those that are any way injured, and to plead their causes, ver. 6. *He giveth right to the poor*, avengeth their quarrel upon their persecutors, and forceth them to make restitution of what they have robbed them of. If men will not right the injured poor, God will.

4. He takes a particular care for the protection of his good subjects, ver. 7. He not only looks on them, but he never looks off them. He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous. Though they may seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, and that befalls them which looks like an oversight of providence, yet the tender careful eye of their heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever towards God in duty, his eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and when we are at the lowest, will not overlook us.

1. Sometimes he prefers good people to places of trust and honour, ver. 7. *With kings are they on the throne*, and every shew is made to bow to theirs. When righteous persons are advanced to places of honour and power, it is in mercy to them, for God's grace in them will both arm them against the temptations that attend preferment, and enable them to improve the opportunity it gives them of doing good. It is also in mercy to those over whom they are set; *When the righteous bear rule the city rejoiceth*. If the righteous be advanced, they are established. They that in honour keep a good conscience, stand upon sure ground, and high places are not in such slippery ground to them as they are to others. But because it is not often that we see good men made great men in this world, this may be supposed to refer to the honour to which the righteous shall rise when their Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, for then only they shall be exalted for ever, and established for ever, then shall they all shine forth as the sun, and be made kings and priests to our God.

2. If at any time he brings them into affliction, it is for the good of their souls, ver. 8, 9, 10. Some good people are preferred to honour and power, but others are in trouble. Now observe, (1.) The distress supposed, ver. 8. *If they be bound in fetters*, laid in prison as Joseph was, or holden in the cords of any other affliction, suppose them confined by pain and sickness, hampered by poverty, bound in their counsels, and notwithstanding all their struggles held long in this distress. This was Job's case: He was caught and kept fast in the cords of anguish, as some read it. But observe, (2.) The design God has in bringing his people into such distresses as these,

it is for the benefit of their souls; the consideration of which would reconcile us to affliction, and make us think well of it. Three things God intends when he afflicts us, (1.) To discover past sins to us, and to bring them to our remembrance, ver. 9. *Then he shews them* that sin is in them which before they did not see. He discovers to them the fact of sin, he shews them their work; sin is our own work; if there be any good in us it is God's work; and we are concerned to see what work we have made by sin. He discovers the fault of sin, shews them their transgressions of the law of God, and withal the sinfulness of sin, that they have exceeded and have been beyond measure sinful. True penitents lay a load upon themselves, do not extenuate, but aggravate their sins, and own that they have exceeded in them. Affliction sometimes answers the sin, however it awakens the conscience, and puts men upon considering. (2.) To dispose our hearts to receive present instruction: *Then he opens their ear to discipline*, ver. 10. Whom God chastens he teaches, Psal. xciv. 12. and the affliction makes people willing to learn, softens the wax that it may receive the impression of the seal, yet it doth not do it of itself, but the grace of God working with and by it: it is he that opens ears, that opens the heart, who has the key of David. (3.) To deter and draw us off from iniquity for the future: This is the errand on which the affliction is sent; it is a command to return from iniquity, to have no more to do with sin, turn from it with an aversion to it, and a resolution never to return to it any more, Hos. xiv. 8.

3. If the affliction do its work, and accomplish that for which it is sent, he will comfort them again according to the time he has afflicted them, ver. 11. *If they obey and serve him*, if they comply with his design and serve his purpose in these dispensations, if when the affliction is removed they continue in the same good mind that they were in when they were under the smart of it, and perform the vows they made then, if they live in obedience to God's commands, particularly those which relate to his service and worship, and in all instances make conscience of their duty to him, then they shall spend their days in prosperity again, and their years in true pleasures. Religion and piety is the only sure way to prosperity and pleasure. This is a certain truth, and yet few will believe it. If we faithfully serve God, (1.) We have the promise of outward prosperity, the promise of the life that now is, and the comforts of it as far as it is for God's glory and our good, and who would desire them any further? (2.) We have the possession of inward pleasures, the comfort of communion with God, and a good conscience, and that great peace which they have that love God's law, If we rejoice not in the Lord always, and in hope of eternal life, it is our own fault: And what better pleasures can we spend our years in?

4. If the affliction do not do its work, let them expect the furnace to be heated seven times hotter till they are consumed, ver. 12. *If they obey not*, if they are not bettered by their afflictions, are not reclaimed and reformed, they shall perish by the sword of God's wrath. Those whom his rod is not the cure of, his sword will be the death of; and the consuming fire will prevail if the refining fire do not. For when God judgeth he will overcome. *If Ahab in his distress trespasses yet more against the Lord. This is that king Ahab that is marked for ruin*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. Jer. vi. 20, 30. God would have instructed them by their afflictions, but they received not instruction, would not take the hints that were given them; and therefore they shall "die without knowledge," ere they are aware, without any further previous notices given them! or they shall "die because they were without knowledge," notwithstanding the means of knowledge which they were blessed with. They that "die without knowledge," die without grace, and are undone for ever.

Lastly. He brings ruin upon the hypocrites, the secret enemies of his kingdom, then as he described, ver. 12. who though they were numbered among the righteous whom he had spoken of before, yet did not obey him, but being children of disobedience and darkness become children of wrath and perdition, these are the hypocrites in heart who heap up wrath, ver. 13. See the nature of hypocrisy, it lies in the heart, that is for the world and the flesh when the outside seems to be for God and religion. Many that are saints in shew and saints in word, are hypocrites in heart. That spring is corrupt, and there is an evil treasure there. See the mischievousness of it, hypocrites heap up wrath. They are doing that every day which is provoking to God, and will be reckoned with for it altogether in the great day. *They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath*, Rom. ii. 5. Their sins are laid up in store with God among his treasures, Deut. xxxii. 34. compare James i. 3. As what goes up a vapour comes down a shower, so what goes up sin, if not repented of, will come down wrath. They think they are heaping up wealth, heaping up merits, but when the treasures are opened it will prove they were heaping up wrath.

Observe, (1.) What they do to heap up wrath; what is it that is so provoking? It is this, *they cry not when he binds them*, i.e. when they are in affliction, bound with the cords of trouble, their hearts are hardened, they are stubborn and unhumiliated, and will not cry to God nor make their application to him. They are stupid and senseless as stocks and stones, despising the chastening of the Lord. 5. What are the effects of that wrath, ver. 14. *They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean*. This is the portion of hypocrites, whom Christ denounced many woes against. If they continue impenitent, (1.) They shall die a sudden death; die in youth, when death is most a surprise, and so death (i.e. the consequences of it) always is to hypocrites; as they that die in youth, die when they hoped to live, so hypocrites at death go to hell when they hoped to go to heaven. *When a wicked man dies his expectations shall perish*. (2.) They shall die the second death; their life after death (for so it comes in here) is among the unclean; among the fornicators, so some; among the worst and vilest of sinners, notwithstanding their specious and plausible profession. It is among the Sodomites, so margin; those filthy wretches, who going a ter strange flesh are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. The souls of the wicked live after death, but they live among the unclean, the unclean spirits, the devil and his angels, for ever separated from the New Jerusalem into which no unclean thing shall enter.

15. He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression. 16. Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness, and that which should be set on thy table, should be full of fatness. 17. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee. 18. Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee. 19. Will he esteem thy riches? no not gold, nor all the forces of strength. 20. Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place. 21. Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction,



affliction. 22. Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him? 23. Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say thou hast wrought iniquity?

Elihu here comes more closely to Job; and,

1. He tells him what God would have done for him before this, if he had been duly humbled under his affliction. We all know how ready God is to deliver the poor in his affliction, ver. 15. He always was so; the poor in spirit, those that are of a broken and contrite heart, he looks upon with tenderness, and when they are in affliction is ready to help them. He opens their ears, and makes them to hear joy and gladness, even in their oppressions; while he doth not yet deliver them, he speaks to them good words and comfortable words, for the encouragement of their faith and patience, the silencing of their fears, and the balancing of their griefs; and even so (ver. 16.) would he have done to thee, if thou hadst submitted to his providence and carried thyself well, he would have delivered and comforted thee, and we should have had none of these complaints. If thou hadst accommodated thyself to the will of God, thy liberty and piety would have been restored to thee with advantage. (1.) Thou hadst been enlarged; and not confined thus by thy sickness and disgrace; he would have removed thee into a broad place where there is no straitness, and thou shouldst no longer have been cramped thus, and have had all thy measures broken. (2.) Thou hadst been enriched, and not in this poor condition; thou shouldst have had thy table richly spread, not only with food convenient, but with the finest of the wheat, (see Deut. xxxii. 14.) and the fattest of the flesh. Note, It ought to silence us under our afflictions to consider that if we were better, it would be every way better with us: if we had answered the ends of an affliction, the affliction would be removed: and deliverance would come if we were ready for it. God would have done well for us, if we had carried ourselves well, Psa. lxxxii. 13, 14. Isa. xlviii. 18.

2. He chargeth him with standing in his own light, and makes him the cause of the continuance of his own trouble, ver. 17. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked, i.e. Whatever thou art really, in this thing thou hast carried thyself like a wicked man, hast spoken and done like them; thou hast gratified them and served their cause; and therefore judgment and justice take hold on thee as a wicked man, because thou goest in company with them, actest as if thou wert in their interest, aiding and abetting. Thou hast maintained the cause of the wicked, and such as a man's cause is, such will the judgment of God be upon him. So Bishop Patrick. It is dangerous being on the wrong side: necessities to treason will be dealt with as principals.

3. He cautions him not to persist in his frowardness: several good cautions he gives him to this purpose.

1. Let him not make light of divine vengeance, nor be secure, as if he were in no danger of it, ver. 18. Because there is wrath, i.e. Because God is a righteous governor, who resents all the affronts given to his government. Because he has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and righteousness of men, and because thou hast reason to fear that thou art under God's pleasure, therefore beware lest he take thee away suddenly with his stroke, and be so wise as to make thy peace with him quickly, and get his anger turned away from thee. A warning to this purpose Job had given his friends, chap. xix. 29. Be ye afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword. Thus contenders are apt with too much boldness to bind one another over to the judgment of God, and threaten one another with his wrath: but he that keeps a good conscience needs not fear the impotent menaces of proud men. But this was a friendly caution to Job, and necessary. Even good men have need to be kept to their duty by the fear of God's wrath. Thou art a wise and good man, but beware lest he take thee away, for the wisest and best have enough in them to deserve his stroke.

2. Let him not promise himself that if God's wrath should kindle against him he could find out ways to escape the strokes of it. (1.) There is no escaping by money; no purchasing a pardon with silver or gold, and such corruptible things. Even a great ransom cannot deliver thee when God enters into judgment with thee: his justice cannot be bribed, nor any of the ministers of his justice; will he esteem thy riches, and take from them a commutation of the punishment? No, not gold ver. 19. If thou hadst as much wealth as ever thou hadst, that would not ease thee, would not secure thee from the stroke of God's wrath, in the day of the revelation of which riches profit not, Prov. xi. 4. See Psa. xlix. 7, 8. (2.) No escaping by rescue. If all the forces of strength were at thy command, if thou couldst muster never so many servants and vassals to appear for thee to force thee out of the hands of divine vengeance, it were all in vain, God would not regard it, there is none that can deliver out of his hand. (3.) No escaping by absconding, ver. 20. Desire not the night, which often favours the retreat of a conquered army, and covers it: think not that thou canst so escape the righteous judgment of God, for the darkness hideth not from him, Psa. cxxxix. 11, 12. See Job xxxiv. 22. Think not that because in the night people retire to their place, go up to their beds, and so it is easy then to escape their discovery, that God also ascends to his place and cannot see thee; no, he neither slumbers nor sleeps: his eyes are open upon the children of men, not only in all places but at all times; no rocks or mountains can shelter us from his eye. Some understand it of the night of death. That is the night by which men are cut off from their place, and Job had earnestly breathed unto that night, as the hireling desires the evening, Job vii. 2. But do not do so, saith Elihu, for thou knowest not what the night of death is. Those that passionately wish for death, in hopes to make that their shelter from God's wrath, may perhaps be mistaken. There are those whom wrath pursues into that night.

3. Let him not continue his unjust quarrel with God and his providence, which hitherto he had persisted in when he should have submitted to the affliction, ver. 21. Take heed, look well to thine own spirit, and regard not iniquity, return not to it; so some; for it is at thy peril if thou do. Let us never dare to think a favourable thought of sin, never indulge it nor allow ourselves in it. Elihu thinks Job had need of this caution, he having chosen iniquity rather than affliction, i.e. having chosen rather to gratify his own pride and humour in contending with God, than to mortify it by a submission to him, and accepting the punishment. We may take it more generally, and observe, that they who choose iniquity rather than affliction, make a very foolish choice; that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, increase their wealth by sinful pursuits, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness sake by sinful compliances against their consciences, these make a choice they will repent of, for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction. It is an evil, an only evil.

4. Let him not dare to prescribe to God, nor give him his measures, ver. 22, 23. Behold, God exalteth by his power, i.e. He doth, may, and can, set up and pull down whom he pleaseth, and therefore it is not for thee and me to contend with him. The more we magnify God, the more do we humble and abuse ourselves. Now consider,

(1.) That God is an absolute sovereign, He exalteth himself by his own power, and not by strength derived from any other: he exalteth whom he pleaseth, exalteth those that are afflicted and cast down by the strength and power which he gives his people. And therefore who has enjoined him his way? Who presides above him in his way? Is there any superior from whom he has his commission, and to whom he is accountable? No, he himself is supreme and independent. Who puts him in mind of his way? so some; doth the eternal mind need a remembrancer? No, his own way as well as ours is ever before him; he has not received orders or instructions from any: Isa. xl. 13, 14. nor is he accountable to any: he enjoins to all the creatures their way, let us not then enjoin him his, but leave it to him to govern the world, who is fit to do it.

(2.) That he is an incomparable teacher. Who teacheth like him? It is absurd for us to teach him who is himself the fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction: he that teacheth man knowledge, and, so as none else can, shall not he know? Psa. xciv. 9, 10. Shall we light a candle to the sun? Observe, when Elihu would give glory to God as a ruler, he praiseth him as a teacher, for rulers must teach; God doth so, he binds with the cords of a man. In this, as in other things, he is a non-such. None so fit to direct his own actions as he himself is; he knows what he has to do, and how to do it for the best, and needs no information or advice. Solomon himself had a privy council to advise him, but the King of kings has none. Nor is any so fit to direct our actions as he is: none teacheth with such authority and convincing evidence, with such condescension and compassion, nor with such power and efficacy as God doth. He teacheth by the Bible, and that is the best book, teacheth by his Son, and he is the best master.

(3.) That he is unexceptionably just in all his proceedings. Who can say thou hast wrought iniquity? Not who dares to say it; many do iniquity, but if they tell them of it, it is at their peril; but who can say it, who had any cause to say it? Who can say it, and prove it? It is a maxim undoubtedly true, without limitation, that the King of kings can do no wrong.

24. Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold. 25. Every man may see it, man may behold it afar off. 26. Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. 27. For he maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: 28. Which the clouds do drop, and distil upon man abundantly. 29. Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle? 30. Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea. 31. For by them judgeth he the people, he giveth meat in abundance. 32. With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine, by the cloud that cometh betwixt. 33. The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.

Elihu is here endeavouring to possess Job with great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him into a cheerful submission to his providence.

1. He represents the work of God in general as illustrious and conspicuous, ver. 24. His whole work is so, God doth nothing mean: this is a good reason why we should acquiesce in all the operations of his providence concerning us in particular: his visible works, those of nature, and which concern the world in general, are such as we admire and commend, and observe the Creator's wisdom, power and goodness, shall we then find fault with his dispensations concerning us, and the counsels of his will concerning our affairs? We are here called to consider the work of God, Eccl. vii. 13. (1.) It is plain before our eyes, nothing more obvious: it is what men behold: every man that has but half an eye may see it, may behold it afar off. Look which way we will, and we see the products of God's wisdom and power; we see that done, and that in the doing, concerning which we cannot but say, this is the work of God; the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing. Every man may see afar off the heaven and all its lights, the earth and all its fruits, to be the work of omnipotence; and much more when we behold them nigh at hand: look at the minutest works of nature through a microscope, do they appear curious? The eternal power and Godhead of the Creator is clearly seen and understood by the things that are made, Rom. i. 20. Every man, even those that have not the benefit of divine revelation, may see this, for there is no speech or language where the voice of these natural constant preachers is not heard, Psa. xix. 3. (2.) It ought to be marvellous in our eyes. The beauty and excellency of the work of God, and the agreement of all the parts of it, is what we must remember to magnify and highly to extol: not only justify it as right and good, and what cannot be blamed, but magnify it as wise and glorious, and such as no creature could contrive or produce. Man may see his works, and is capable of discerning his hand in them, which the beasts are not, and therefore ought to praise them, and give him the glory of them.

2. He represents God, the author of them, as infinite and unsearchable, ver. 26. The streams of being, power, and perfection, should lead us to the fountain. God is great, infinitely so: great in power, for he is omnipotent and independent; great in wealth, for he is self-sufficient and all-sufficient; great in himself, great in all his works, great, and therefore greatly to be praised; great, and therefore we know him not; we know that he is; but not what he is: we know what he is not; but not what he is. We know in part, but not in perfection. This comes in here as a reason why we must not arraign his proceedings, nor find fault with what he doth, because it is speaking evil of the things that we understand not; and answering a matter before we hear it. We know not the duration of its existence, for it is infinite: the number of his years cannot possibly be searched out, for he is eternal, there is no number of them; he is a being without beginning, succession, or period, that ever was and ever will be, and ever the same, the great I AM. This is a good reason why we should not prescribe to him or quarrel with him, because as he is, such are his operations, quite out of our reach.

3. He gives some instances of God's wisdom and power, and sovereign dominion in the works of nature, and the dispensations of common providence, and begins in this chapter with the clouds and the rain that descends from them. We need not be critical in examining either the phrase or the philosophy of this noble discourse. The general scope of it is to shew, (1.) That God is infinitely great and the Lord of all, the first cause and supreme director of all the creatures, and has all power in heaven and earth, and whom therefore we ought with all humility and reverence to adore, to speak well of, and to give honour to. (2.) That it is presumption for us to prescribe to him the rules and methods of his special providence towards



towards the children of men, as to expect from him an account of them, when the operations even of common providences about the meteors are so various and so mysterious, and unaccountable.

Elihu, to affect Job with God's sublimity and sovereignty, had directed him, *chap. xxxv. 5.* to look upon the clouds: now in these verses he shews us what we may observe in the clouds we see, which will lead us to consider the glorious perfections of their Creator. Consider the clouds,

1. As springs to this lower world; the source and treasure of its moisture, and the great bank through which it circulates, and that it is as necessary, and the stagnation of it would be as hurtful to this lower world, as of the blood to the body of man. It is worth while to observe in this common occurrence, (1.) That the clouds above distil upon the earth below: if the heavens become brass, the earth becomes iron; therefore thus the promise of plenty runs, *I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth.* This intimates to us that every good gift is from above, from him who is both Father of lights, and Father of the rain, and instructs us to direct our prayers to him, and to look up. (2.) That they are here said to distil upon man, *ver. 28.* for though indeed he *caused it to rain in the wilderness, where no man is,* Job xxxviii. 26. *Psal. civ. 11.* yet special respect is had to man herein, to whom the inferior creatures are all made servicable, and from whom the actual return of the tributes of praise is required. And among men he *causeth his rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust,* Matt. v. 45. (3.) They are said to distil the water in small drops; not in spouts, as when the windows of heaven were opened, *Gen. vii. 11.* God waters the earth with that with which he once drowned it, only dispensing it in another manner, to let us know how much we lie at his mercy, and how kind he is by giving rain by drops, that the benefit of it may be the further and more equally diffused, as by an artificial water-pot. (4.) Though sometimes the rain comes in very small drops, yet at other times it pours down in great rain, and this difference between one shower and another must be resolved into the divine providence which orders it so. (5.) Though it comes down in drops, yet it distils upon man abundantly, *ver. 28.* and therefore it is called *the river of God which is full of water,* *Psal. xlv. 9.* (6.) The clouds pour down accordingly to the vapour that they draw up, *ver. 27.* Thus just the heavens are to the earth, but the earth is not so in the returns it makes. (7.) The produce of the clouds is sometimes a great terror, and at other times a great favour to the earth, *ver. 31.* When he pleaseth, *he doth by them judge the people* he is angry with. Storms, and tempests, and excessive rains, destroying the fruits of the earth, and causing inundations, come from the clouds; but on the other hand ordinarily from them he giveth meat in abundance, they drop fatness upon the pastures that are clothed with flocks, and the vallies that are covered with corn, *Psal. lxx. 11, 12, 13.* Lastly, Notice is here sometimes given of the approach of rain, *ver. 30.* The noise thereof, among other things, sheweth concerning it. Hence we read, *1 Kings xviii. 41.* of the sound of abundance of rain, or as it is in the margin, a sound of a noise of rain before it came, and a welcome harbinger it was then. And as the noise, so the face of the sky sheweth concerning it, *Luke xii. 56.* The cattle also by a strange instinct are apprehensive of a change in the weather nigh at hand, and seek shelter, shaming man, who will not foresee the evil and hide himself.

2. As shadows to the upper world, *ver. 29.* Can any understand the spreading of the clouds? They are spread over the earth as a curtain or canopy; how they come to be so, how stretched out and how poised as they are, we cannot understand, though we daily see they are so. Shall we then pretend to understand the reasons and methods of God's judicial proceedings with the children of men, whose characters and cases are so various, when we cannot account for the spreadings of the clouds, which cover the light? *ver. 32.* It is a cloud coming betwixt, *chap. xxxvi. 9.* And this we are sensible of, that by the interpolation of the clouds between us and the sun we are, (1.) Sometimes favoured, for they serve as an umbrella to shelter us from the violent heat of the sun, which otherwise would beat upon us. *A cloud of dew in the heat of harvest,* is spoken of as a very great refreshment, *Isa. xviii. 4.* (2.) Sometimes we are by them frowned upon, for they darken the earth at noon-day, and eclipse the light of the sun. Sin is compared to a cloud, (*Psal. xlv. 22.*) because it comes between us and the light of God's countenance, and obstructs the shining of it. But though the clouds darken the sun for a time, and pour down rain, yet (*post nubila Phœbus*) after he has wearied the cloud he spreads his light upon it, *ver. 30.* There is a clear shining after rain, *2 Sam. xxiii. 6.* the sun-beams are darted forth, and reach to cover even the bottom of the sea, thence to exhale a fresh supply of vapours, and to raise recruits from the clouds. In all this we must remember to magnify the word of God.

### C H A P. XXXVII.

Elihu here goes on to extol the wonderful powers of God in the meteors and all the changes of the weather; if in those changes we submit to the will of God, take the weather as it is, and make the best of it, why should we not do so in other changes of our condition? Here he observes the hand of God, (1.) In the thunder and lightning, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) In the frost and snow, the rains and wind, *ver. 6—13.* He applies it to Job, and challengeth him to solve the phenomena of these works of nature, that confessing his ignorance in them, he might own himself an incompetent judge in the proceedings of divine providence, *ver. 14—22.* And then, (4.) Concludes with his principle which he undertook to make out, that God is great and greatly to be feared, *ver. 23, 24.*

1. **A**T this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place. 2. Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. 3. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. 4. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency, and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. 5. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doth he, which we cannot comprehend.

Thunder and lightning, which usually go together, are sensible indications of the glory and majesty, the power and terror, of Almighty God, one to the ear, and the other to the eye: in these God *leaves not himself without witness of his greatness,* as in the rain from heaven and fruitful seasons he leaves not himself without witness of his goodness, (*Acts xix. 17.*) even to the most stupid and unthinking. Though there be natural causes and useful effects of them, which the philosophers undertake to account for, yet they seem chiefly designed by the Creator to startle and awaken the slumbering dozing world of mankind to the consideration of a God

above them. The eye and the ear are the two learning senses; and therefore though it is possible it might have been, yet they say it was never known in fact that any one was born both blind and deaf. By the word of God divine instructions are conveyed to the mind through the ear, by his works through the eye: but because those ordinary sights and sounds do not duly affect men, God is pleased sometimes to astonish men by the eye with his lightnings, and by the ear with his thunder. It is very probable that at this time, when Elihu was speaking, it thundered and lightened, for he speaks of it as present: and God being about to speak, *chap. xxxviii. 1.* these were, as afterwards on mount Sinai, the proper prefaces to command attention and awe. Observe here,

1. How Elihu was himself affected, and desired to affect Job with the appearances of God's glory in the thunder and lightning, *ver. 1, 2.* For my part (saith Elihu) my heart trembleth at it, though I have often heard it, often seen it, yet it is still terrible to me, and makes every joint of me tremble, and my heart bent so as if it would move out of its place. Thunder and lightning have been dreadful to the wicked; the emperor Caligula would run into a corner, or under a bed, for fear of them: those who are very much astonished, we say are thunder-struck: and even good people think them very awful: and that which makes them the more terrible, is the hurt often done by lightning, many have been killed by it: Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ruins by it; it is a sensible indication what God would do to this sinful world, and what he will do at the last by the fire to which it is reserved. Our hearts, like Elihu's, should tremble at it for fear of God's judgments, *Psal. cxix. 120.* He also calls upon Job to attend to it, *ver. 2.* *Hear attentively the noise of his voice.* Perhaps as yet it thundered at a distance, and could not be heard without listening: or, rather, though the thunder itself will be heard, and whatever we are doing we cannot help attending to it; yet to apprehend and understand the instructions God thereby gives us, we have need to hear with great attention and application of mind. Thunder is called *the voice of the Lord,* *Psal. xxix. 3.* &c. because by it God speaks to the children of men to fear before him, and it should put us in mind of that mighty word by which the world was at first made, which is called thunder, *Psal. cix. 3.* *At the voice of thy thunder they hasten away,* viz. the waters, when God said, *let them be gathered into one place.* They that are themselves affected with God's greatness should labour to affect others.

2. How he describes them. (1.) Their original, not their second causes, but their first. God directs the thunder, and the lightning is his, *ver. 3.* Their production and motion is not from chance, but from the counsel of God, and under the direction and dominion of his providence, though to us they seem accidental and ungovernable. (2.) Their extent. The claps of thunder roll under the whole heaven, and are heard far and near, so are the lightnings darted to the ends of the earth, they come out of the one part under heaven, and shine to the other, *Luke xvii. 24.* Though the same lightning and thunder doth not reach to all places, yet they reach to very distant places in a moment, and there is no place but some time or other has these alarms from heaven. (3.) Their order: the lightning is first directed, and after it a voice roars, *ver. 4.* The flash of fire and the noise it makes in a watery cloud are really at the same time; but because the motion of light is much quicker than that of sounds, we see the lightning some time before we hear the thunder, as we see the firing of a great gun at a distance before we hear the report of it. The thunder is here called the voice of God's excellency, because by it he proclaims his transcendent power and greatness. *He sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice,* *Phil. lxviii. 33.* (4.) Their violence: he will not stay them, *7. c.* he doth not need to check them, or hold them back, lest they should grow unruly, and out of his power to restrain them, but lets them take their course, saith to them, *go, and they go; come, and they come; do this, and they do it.* He will not stay the rains and showers that usually follow upon the thunder, which he had spoken of, *chap. xxxvi. 27—29.* so some; but will pour them out upon the earth, *when his voice is heard.* Thunder showers are sweeping rains, and for them he makes the lightning, *Psal. xxxv. 7.* (5.) The inference he draws from all this, *ver. 5.* Doth God thunder thus marvellously with his voice! We must then conclude, that his other works are great, and such as we cannot comprehend: from this one instance we may argue to all, that in the dispensations of his providence there is that which is too great, too strong, for us to oppose or strive against, and too high, too deep for us to arraign or quarrel with.

6. For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength. 7. He sealeth up the hand of every man: that all men may know his work. 8. Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places. 9. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. 10. By the breath of God, frost is given: and the breadth of the waters are straitened. 11. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: He scattereth his bright cloud. 12. And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. 13. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.

The changes and extremities of the weather, wet or dry, hot or cold, is the subject of a great deal of our common talk and observation: but how seldom do we think and speak of these things, as Elihu doth here with an awful regard to God the director of them, who shews his power, and serves the purposes of his providence by them? We must take notice of the glory of God not only in the thunder and lightning, but in the more common revolutions of the weather, which are not so terrible, and which make less noise. As,

1. In the snow and rain, *ver. 6.* Thunder and lightning happen usually in the summer, but here he takes notice of the winter weather: then he saith to the snow, *be thou on the earth:* he commissions it, he commands it, he appoints it, where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. He speaks, and it is done, as in the creation of the world; *let there be light:* so in the works of common providence, *snow, be thou on the earth.* Saying and doing are not two things with God, though they are with us. When he speaks the word, the small rain distils, and the great rain pours down as he pleaseth. The winter rain, so the LXX, for in these countries, when the winter was past, the rain was over and gone, *Cant. ii. 11.* The distinction in the Hebrew between the small rain and the great rain is this, that the former is called a shower of rain, the latter of rains, many showers in one: but all are the showers of his strength: the power of God is to be observed as much in the small rain that soaks into the earth, as in the great rain that



batters on the house top, and washeth away all before it. Note, The providence of God is to be acknowledged both by husbandmen in the fields, and travellers upon the road, in every shower of rain, whether it doth them a kindness or a diskindness. It is sin and folly to contend with God's providence in the weather; if he send the snow or rain, can we hinder them? or shall we be angry at them? it is as absurd to quarrel with any other disposal of providence concerning ourselves or ours.

The effect of the extremity of the winter-weather is, that it both obligeth men and beasts to retire, making it uncomfortable and unsafe for them to go abroad. (1.) Men retire to their houses from their labours in the field, and keep within doors, *ver. 7. He seals up the hand of every man.* In frost and snow husbandmen cannot follow their business, nor some tradesmen, nor travellers, when the weather is extreme; the plough is laid by, the shipping laid up, nothing to be done, nothing to be got, that men being taken off from their own work, may know his work, and contemplate that, and give him the glory of that: and by the consideration of that work of his in the weather which seals up their hands, be led to celebrate his other great and marvellous works. Note, When we are upon any account disabled to follow our worldly business, and taken off from it, we should spend our time rather in the exercises of piety and devotion, in acquainting ourselves with the works of God, and praising him in them, than in foolish idle sports and recreations. When our hands are sealed up our hearts should be thus opened, and the less we have at any time to do in the world, the more we should do for God and our souls. When we are confined to our houses, we should thereby be driven to our bibles and our knees. (2.) The beasts also retire to their dens, and remain in their close places, *ver. 8.* It is meant of the wild beasts, which being wild must seek a shelter for themselves to which by instinct they are directed, while the tame beasts that are serviceable to man, are housed and protected by his care, as *Exod. ix. 20.* The ass has no den but his master's crib, and thither he goes, not only to be safe and warm, but to be fed. Nature directs all creatures to shelter themselves from a storm, and shall man only be unprovided of an ark?

2. In the winds, which blow from different quarters and produce different effects, *ver. 9.* Out of the hidden place (so it may be read) comes the whirlwind, it turns round, and so it is hard to say from which point it comes, but it comes from the secret chamber, as the word signifies, which I am not so willing to understand of the south, because he saith here, *ver. 17.* that the wind out of the south is so far from being a whirlwind, that it is a warming, quieting wind. But at this time, perhaps, Elihu saw a whirlwind-cloud coming out of the south and making towards them, out of which the Lord spake soon after, *chap. xxxviii. 1.* Or, if turbulent winds which bring showers, come out of the south, cold and dying blasts come out of the north to scatter the vapours, and clear the air of them.

3. In the frost, *ver. 10.* See the cause of it; it is given by the breath of God, i. e. by the word of his power, and command of his will: or as some understand it by the wind, which is the breath of God, as the thunder is his voice: it is caused by the cold freezing wind out of the north. See the effect of it: *the breadth of the waters is straitened*, i. e. the waters that had spread themselves, and flowed with a great deal of liberty, are congealed, benumbed, arrested, bound up in crystal fetters. This is such an instance of the power of God, as if it were not common would be next to a miracle.

4. In the clouds; the womb where all these watery meteors are conceived, of which he had spoken, *chap. xxxvi. 28.* Three sorts of clouds he here speaks of,

1. Close black thick clouds, pregnant with showers, and these with watering he varies, *ver. 11. i. e.* They spend themselves, and are exhausted by the rain into which they melt and are dissolved, pouring out water until they are weary and can pour out no more; see what pains, as I may say, the creatures, even those above us, take to serve man: the clouds water the earth until they are weary; they spend and are spent for our benefit; which shames and condemns us for the little good we do in our places, though it would be to our own advantage; for *he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.*

2. Bright thin clouds, clouds without water, these he scattereth, they are dispersed of themselves, and not dissolved into rain, but what goes with them we know not. The bright cloud in the evening when the sky is red, is scattered, and proves an earnest of a fair day, *Matt. xvi. 2.*

3. Flying clouds, which do not dissolve as the thick cloud into a close rain, but are carried upon the wings of the wind from place to place, dropping showers as they go, and these are said to be turned round about by his counsels, *ver. 12.* The common people say the rain goes by planets, which is as bad divinity as it is philosophy, for it is guided and governed by the counsel of God, which extends itself even to those things that seem most casual and minute, *that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them*, for the stormy winds and the clouds that are driven by them fulfil his word; and by this means he causeth it to rain upon one city and not upon another, *Amos iv. 7, 8.* Thus his will is done upon the face of the world in the earth, i. e. among the children of men, to whom God has an eye in all these things, of whom it is said, *that he made them to dwell on the face of all the earth*, *Acts xvii. 26.* The inferior creatures being not capable of doing moral actions are not capable of receiving rewards or punishments; but among the children of men God causeth the rain to come either for the correction of his land, or for a mercy to it, *ver. 13.* (1.) Rain sometimes turns into a judgment: it is a scourge to a sinful land: as once it was for the destruction of the whole world, so it is now often for the correction or discipline of some parts of it, by hindering seed-time and harvest, raising the waters, and damaging the fruits. Some have said that our nation has received much more prejudice by the excess of rain than by the want of it. (2.) At other times it is a blessing; it is for his land, that that may be made fruitful, and besides that which is just necessary, he gives for mercy to fatten it, and make it more fruitful. See what a necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given, may be either a great judgment or a great mercy, and without God we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam.

14. Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wonderful works of God. 15. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine? 16. Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds, the wonderful works of him which is perfect in knowledge? 17. How thy garments are warm when he quieteth the earth by the south wind? 18. Hast thou with him spread out the sky? which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass? 19. Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. 20. Shall it be

told him that I speak? if a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.

Elihu here applies himself closely to Job, desiring him to apply what he had hitherto said to himself. He begs he would hearken to this discourse, *ver. 14.* that he would pause a while; *stand still and consider the wonderful works of God.* What we hear is not likely to profit us unless we consider it, and we are not likely to consider things fully unless we stand still, and compose ourselves to the consideration of them. The works of God being wonderful, both deserve and need our consideration, and the due consideration of them will help to reconcile us to all his providences.

Elihu for the humbling of Job shews him,

1. That he had no insight at all into natural causes, could neither see the springs of them, nor foresee the effects of them, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* Dost thou know this, and know that, which are the wonderful works of him, which is perfect in knowledge? We are here taught, (1.) The perfection of God's knowledge: it is one of the most glorious perfections of God that he is perfect in knowledge: it is omniscience. His knowledge is intuitive, he sees and doth not know by report; it is intimate and intire. He knows things truly, and not by their colours, thoroughly, and not by piece-meal. To his knowledge there is nothing distant, but all near; nothing future, but all present; nothing hid, but all open. And we ought to acknowledge this in all his wonderful works, and it is sufficient to satisfy us in those wonderful works which we know not the meaning of, that they are the works of one that knows what he doth.

(2.) The imperfection of our knowledge. The greatest philosophers are much in the dark concerning the powers and works of nature. We are a paradox to ourselves, and every thing about us is a mystery. The gravitation of bodies, and the cohesion of the parts, are most certain and yet unaccountable. It is good for us to be made sensible of our own ignorance; some have confessed it, and those that would not have betrayed it: but we must all infer from it what incompetent judges we are of the divine politics, who understand so little even of the divine mechanics. (1.) We know not what orders God has given concerning the clouds, nor what orders he will give, *ver. 15.* That is all done by determination and with design we are sure, but what is determined and what designed, and when the plan was laid we know not. God often causeth the light of his cloud to shine; in the rainbow, so some; in the lightning, so others: but did we foresee, or could we foresee when he would do it? If we foresee the change of weather a few hours before, when second causes have begun to work by the weather-glass, or vulgar observation, yet how little doth that shew us of the purposes of God by these changes?

(2.) We know not how the clouds are poised in the air, the balancing of them, which is one of the wonderful works of God. They are so balanced, so spread, as that they never rob us of the benefit of the sun, even the cloudy day is day: so balanced as that they do not sit at once, or burst into cataracts or water-spouts: the rainbow is an intimation of God's favour in balancing the clouds so as to keep them from drowning the world. Nay, so are they balanced as that they impartially distribute their showers on the earth, so that one time or other every place has its share.

(3.) We know not how the comfortable change comes when the winter is past, *ver. 17.* (1.) How the weather becomes warm after it has been cold. We know how our garment came to be warm upon us, i. e. how we come to be warm in our clothes, by reason of the warmth of the air we breathe in. Without God's blessing we should clothe us and not be warm, *Hag. i. 6.* But when he so orders it, the clothes are warm upon us, which in the extremity of cold weather would not serve to keep us warm. (2.) How it becomes calm after it has been stormy; he quieteth the earth with the south wind, when the spring comes. As he has a blustering, freezing north-wind, so he has a thawing, composing south-wind; the Spirit is compared to both, because he both convinceth and comforteth, *Car. iv. 16.*

2. That he had no share at all in the first making of the world, *ver. 18.* Hast thou with him spread out the sky? Thou canst not pretend to have stretched it out without him, nor to have stretched it out in conjunction with him, for he was far from needing any help, either in contriving or working. The creation of the vast expanse of the visible heavens (*Gen. i. 6, 7, 8.*) which we see in being to this day, is a glorious instance of the divine power, considering, (1.) That though it is fluid, yet it is firm: it is strong, and has its name from its stability. It still is what it was, and suffers no decay, nor shall the ordinances of heaven be altered till the lease expires with time. (2.) That though it is large, it is bright and most curiously fine; it is a molten looking-glass smooth and polished, and without the least flaw or crack: And in which as in a looking-glass we may behold the glory of God, and the wisdom of his handy work, *Psal. xix. 1.* When we look up to heaven above, we should remember it is a mirror or looking-glass, not to shew us our own faces, but to be a faint representation of the purity, dignity, and brightness of the upper world, and its glorious inhabitants.

3. That neither he nor they were able to speak of the glory of God in any proportion to the merit of the subject, *ver. 29, 30.* (1.) He challengeth Job to be their director, if he durst undertake it. He speaks it ironically. Teach us, if thou canst, what we shall say unto him: Thou hast a mind to reason with God, and wouldest have us to contend with him on thy behalf; teach us then what we shall say: Canst thou see further into this abyss than we can? If thou canst, favour us with the discoveries, furnish us with instructions. (2.) He owns his own insufficiency both in speaking to God, and in speaking of him: *We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* Note, The best of men are much in the dark concerning the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and the administrations of the divine government. They that through grace know much of God, yet it is little, it is nothing, in comparison with what is to be known, and what will be known, when that which is perfect is come, and the veil shall be rent. When we would speak of God, we speak confusedly and with great uncertainty, and are presently at a loss and run aground, not for want of matter, but want of words; and as we must always begin with fear and trembling, lest we speak amiss, (*De Deo etiam vera dicere periculosum est*) so we must conclude with shame and blushing, that we have spoken no better. Elihu himself had for his part spoken very well on God's behalf, and yet is far from expecting a fee, or thinking God was beholden to him for it, or that he was fit to be standing counsel for him, that (1.) He is even ashamed of what he has said, not of the cause, but of his own management of it. *Shall it be told him that I speak?* Shall it be reported to him as a meritorious piece of service worthy his notice? By no means, let it never be spoken of, for he fears the subject has suffered by his undertaking it, as a fine face is wronged by an ill painter, and his performance is so far from meriting thanks, that it needs pardon. When we have done all we can for God, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants, and have nothing at all to boast of. He is afraid of saying any more. If a man speak, if he undertake to plead for God, much more if he offers to plead against him, surely he shall be swallowed up. If he speak presumptuously, God's wrath shall soon consume



hume him, but if never so well, he will soon loose himself in the mystery, and be overpowered by the divine lustre. Astonishment will strike him blind and dumb.

21. And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth and cleanseeth them. 22. Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty. 23. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict. 24. Men do therefore fear him, he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.

Elihu here concludes his discourse with some short but great sayings concerning the glory of God, as that which he was himself possessed, and desired to possess others with a holy awe of. He speaks concisely and in haste, because it should seem he perceived that God was about to take the work into his own hands.

1. He observes, that God who has said he will dwell in the thick darkness, and make that his pavilion, (2 Chron. vi. 1. Psal. xviii. 11.) is in that awful chariot advancing towards them, as if he were preparing his throne for judgment, surrounded with clouds and darkness, Psal. xevii. 2. to ver. 9. he saw the cloud with a whirlwind in the bosom of it, coming out of the south; but now it hung so thick, so black over their heads, that they could none of them see the bright light which just before was in the clouds: The light of the sun was now eclipsed; thus minded him of the darkness, by reason of which he could not speak, ver. 19. and made him afraid to go on, ver. 20. Thus the disciples feared when they entered into a cloud, Luke ix. 34, yet he looks to the north and sees clear that way, which gives him hopes that the clouds are not gathering for a deluge, they are covered, but not surrounded with them; and he expects that the wind will pass (so it may be read) and cleanse them. Such a wind as passed over the earth to clear it from the waters of Noah's flood, (Gen. viii. 1.) in token of the return of God's favour, and then fair weather will come out of the north, ver. 22. and all will be well. God will not always frown, nor contend for ever.

2. He hastens to conclude, now God is about to speak; and therefore delivers much in a few words, as the sum of all that he had been discoursing of, which, if duly considered, would not only clench the nail he had been driving, but make way for what God would say.

1. That with God is terrible majesty: He is a God of glory, and such transcendent perfection as cannot but strike an awe upon all his attendants, and a terror upon all his adversaries. With God is terrible praise; so some; for he is fearful in praises, Exod. xv. 11.

2. That when we speak touching the Almighty, we must own that we cannot find him out: our finite understandings cannot comprehend his infinite perfections: Can we put the sea into an egg-shell? We cannot trace the steps he takes in his providence. His way is in the sea.

3. That he is excellent in power. It is the excellency of his power that he can do whatever he pleaseth in heaven and earth. The universal extent and irresistible force of his power, are the excellency of it: no creature has an arm like him, so long, so strong.

4. That he is no less excellent in wisdom and righteousness; in judgment and plenty of justice; else there would be little excellency in his power. He that can do every thing, we may be sure will do every thing for the best, for he is infinitely wise; and will not in any thing do wrong, for he is infinitely just. When he executes judgments upon sinners, yet there is plenty of justice in it, and he inflicts not more than they deserve.

5. That he will not afflict, i. e. he will not afflict willingly; it is no pleasure to him to grieve the children of men, much less his own children: he never afflicts but when there is a cause, and when there is need, and he doth not overburden us with affliction, but considers our frame. Some read it thus: The Almighty whom we cannot find out is great in power, but he will not afflict in judgment, and plenty of justice, nor is extreme to mark what we do amiss.

6. He values not the censures of those that are wise in their own conceit. He respecteth them not, ver. 24. He will not alter his counsels to oblige them, nor can those that prescribe to him prevail with him to do as they would have him do. He regards the prayer of the humble, but not the politics of the crafty: No, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, 1 Cor. i. 25.

Lastly, From all this it is easy to infer, that since God is great he is greatly to be feared; nay, because he is gracious and will not afflict, men do therefore fear him; for there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared, Psal. cxxx. 4. It is the duty and interest of all men to fear God: Men shall fear him; so some. Sooner or later they shall fear him. They that will not fear the Lord and his goodness, shall for ever tremble under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath.

## C H A P. XXXVIII

In most disputes the strife is who shall have the last word: Job's friends had in this controversy timely yielded it to Job, and then he to Elihu: But after all the wranglings of the council at bar, the judge upon the bench must have the last word; so God had here, and so he will have in every controversy, for every man's judgment proceedeth from him, and by his definitive sentence every man must stand or fall, and every cause be won or lost. Job had often appealed to God, and had talked boldly how he could order his cause before him, and as a prince would go near unto him; but when God took the throne, Job had nothing to say in his own defence, but was silent before him. It is not so easy a matter as some think it to contest with the Almighty: Job's friends had sometimes appealed to God too; O that God would speak! chap. xi. 5. And now at length God doth speak, when Job by Elihu's clear and close arguings was mollified a little, and mortified, and so prepared to hear what God had to say. It is the office of ministers to prepare the way of the Lord. That which the great God designs in this discourse is to humble Job, and bring him to repent of, and to recant his passionate indecent expressions concerning God's providential dealings with him; and this he doth by calling upon Job to compare God's eternity with his own time; God's omniscience with his own ignorance, and God's omnipotence with his own impotency. 1. He begins with an awakening challenge and demand in general, ver. 2, 3. 2. He proceeds in divers particular instances and proofs of Job's utter inability to contend with God, because of his ignorance and weakness; for, (1.) He knew nothing of the founding of the earth, ver. 4—7. (2.) Nothing of the limiting of the sea, ver. 8—11. (3.) Nothing of the morning light, ver. 12—15. (4.) Nothing of the dark recesses of the sea and earth, ver. 16—21.

VOL. II. No. LXXVII\*

(5.) Nothing of the springs in the clouds, ver. 22—27. nor the secret counsels by which they are directed. (6.) He could do nothing towards the production of the rain, or frost, or lightning, ver. 28, 30, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38. Nothing towards the directing of the stars and their influences, ver. 31—33. Nothing towards the making of his own soul, ver. 36. And lastly, he could not provide for the lions and the ravens, ver. 39—41. If in these ordinary works of nature Job was puzzled, how durst he pretend to dive into the counsels of God's government, and to judge of them? In this (as Bishop Patrick observes) God takes up the argument begun by Elihu, (who came nearest to the truth) and prosecutes it in inimitable words, excelling his, and all other men's, in the loftiness of the style, as much as thunder doth a whisper.

1. THEN the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 2. Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? 3. Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Let us observe here,

1. Who speaks; the Lord Jehovah, not a created angel, but the eternal Word himself, the second person in the blessed Trinity, for it is he by whom the worlds were made, and that was no other but the Son of God. The same speaks here that afterwards spoke from mount Sinai. Here he begins with the creation of the world, there with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, and from both is interred the necessity of our subjection to him. Elihu had said that God speaks to men, and they do not perceive it, chap. xxxiii. 14. But this they could not but perceive, and yet we have a more sure word of prophecy.

2. When he spoke: Then: When they had all had their saying, and yet had not gained their point, then it was time for God to interpose, whose judgment is according to truth. When we know not who is in the right, and perhaps are doubtful whether we ourselves are, this may satisfy us that God will determine shortly in the valley of decision, Job iii. 14. Job had silenced his three friends, and yet could not convince them of their integrity in the main; Elihu had silenced Job, and yet could not bring him to acknowledge his mismanagement of this dispute, but now God comes and does both; convinceth Job first of his unadvised speaking, and makes him cry peccavi; and having humbled him, puts honour upon him, by convincing his three friends that they had done him wrong. These two things God will sooner or later do for his people, he will shew them their faults, that they may be themselves ashamed of them, and he will shew others their righteousness, and bring it forth as the light, that they may be ashamed of their unjust censures of them.

3. How he spoke. Out of the whirlwind, the rolling involving cloud, which Elihu took notice of, chap. xxxvii. 1, 2—9. A whirlwind preceded Ezekiel's vision, Ezek. i. 4. and Elijah's, 1 Kings xix. 11. God is said to have his way in the whirlwind, Nahum, i. 3. and to shew that even the stormy wind fulfils his word, here it was made the vehicle of it. This shews what a mighty voice God's is, that it was not lost, but perfectly audible, even in the noise of a whirlwind. Thus God designed to strike Job, and to command his attention. Sometimes God answers his own people in terrible corrections, as out of the whirlwind, but always in righteousness.

4. To whom he spoke. He answered Job, directed his speech to him, to convince him of what was amiss, before he cleared him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him. It is God only that can effectually convince of sin, and those shall be so humbled whom he designs to exalt. Those that desire to hear from God, as Job did, shall certainly hear from him at length.

5. What he said. We may here conjecture that Elihu, or some other of the auditory, wrote down verbatim what was delivered out of the whirlwind, for we find, Rev. x. 4. that when thunders uttered their voices, John was prepared to write: Or if it were not written then, yet the penman of the book being inspired of the Holy Ghost, we are sure that we have here a very true and exact report of what was said: The Spirit, (saith Christ) shall bring you to remembrance, as he did here, what I have said to you.

The preface is very searching.

1. God charges him with ignorance and presumption in what he had said, ver. 2. Who is this that talks at this rate? Is it Job? What, a man? the weak foolish despicable creature, shall he pretend to prescribe to me what I must do, or to quarrel with me for what I have done? Is it Job? what my servant Job? a perfect and an upright man? Can he so far forget himself, and act unlike himself? who, where is he, that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge? Let him shew his face if he dare, and stand to what he hath said. Note, Darkening the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly, is a great affront and provocation to God. Concerning God's counsels, we must own that we are without knowledge. They are a deep which we cannot fathom, we are quite out of our element, out of our aim, when we pretend to account for them: And we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them, with a great deal of niceness and boldness: but alas, we do but darken them instead of explaining them, we confound and perplex ourselves and one another, when we dispute of the order of God's decrees, and the designs and reasons and methods of his operations of providence and grace. A humble faith and sincere obedience, shall see further and better into the secret of the Lord, than all the philosophy of their school, and the searches of science so called. This first word which God spoke is the more observable, because Job in his repentance fastens upon it as that which did his business, and humbled him, chap. xlii. 3. This he repeated and echoed to, as the arrow that stuck fast in him: I am the fool that has darkened counsel. There was some colour to have turned it upon Elihu, as if God meant him, for he spoke last, and was speaking when the whirlwind began, but Job applied it to himself, as becomes us to do when faithful reproofs are given, and not (as most do) to billet them upon other people.

2. He challenges him, to give such proofs of his knowledge, as would serve to justify his inquiries into the divine counsels, ver. 3. Gird up now thy loins like a stout man; prepare thyself for the encounter, I will demand of thee, will put some questions to thee, and answer me if thou canst, before I answer thine. Those that go about to call God to an account, must expect to be catechised and called to an account themselves, that they may be made sensible of their ignorance and arrogance. God here puts Job in mind of what he had said, chap. xiii. 22. Call them, and I will answer: Now make thy words good.

4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. 5. Who hath



batters on the house top, and washeth away all before it. Note, The providence of God is to be acknowledged both by husbandmen in the fields, and travellers upon the road, in every shower of rain, whether it doth them a kindness or a diskindness. It is sin and folly to contend with God's providence in the weather; if he send the snow or rain, can we hinder them? or shall we be angry at them? it is as absurd to quarrel with any other disposal of providence concerning ourselves or ours.

The effect of the extremity of the winter-weather is, that it both obligeth men and beasts to retire, making it uncomfortable and unsafe for them to go abroad. (1.) Men retire to their houses from their labours in the field, and keep within doors, *ver. 7. He seals up the hand of every man.* In frost and snow husbandmen cannot follow their business, nor some tradesmen, nor travellers, when the weather is extreme; the plough is laid by, the shipping laid up, nothing to be done, nothing to be got, that men being taken off from their own work, may know his work, and contemplate that, and give him the glory of that: and by the consideration of that work of his in the weather which seals up their hands, he led to celebrate his other great and marvellous works. Note, When we are upon any account disabled to follow our worldly business, and taken off from it, we should spend our time rather in the exercises of piety and devotion, in acquainting ourselves with the works of God, and praising him in them, than in foolish idle sports and recreations. When our hands are sealed up our hearts should be thus opened, and the less we have at any time to do in the world, the more we should do for God and our souls. When we are confined to our houses, we should thereby be driven to our bibles and our knees. (2.) The beasts also retire to their dens, and remain in their close places, *ver. 8.* It is meant of the wild beasts, which being wild must seek a shelter for themselves to which by instinct they are directed, while the tame beasts that are serviceable to man, are housed and protected by his care, as *Exod. ix. 20.* The ass has no den but his master's crib, and thither he goes, not only to be safe and warm, but to be fed. Nature directs all creatures to shelter themselves from a storm, and shall man only be unprovided of an ark?

2. In the wind, which blow from different quarters and produce different effects, *ver. 9.* Out of the hidden place (so it may be read) comes the whirlwind, it turns round, and so it is hard to say from which point it comes, but it comes from the secret chamber, as the word signifies, which I am not so willing to understand of the south, because he saith here, *ver. 17.* that the wind out of the south is so far from being a whirlwind, that it is a warming, quieting wind. But at this time, perhaps, Elihu saw a whirlwind-cloud coming out of the south and making towards them, out of which the Lord spake soon after, *chap. xxxviii. 1.* Or, if turbulent winds which bring showers, come out of the south, cold and drying blasts come out of the north to scatter the vapours, and clear the air of them.

3. In the frost, *ver. 10.* See the cause of it; it is given by the breath of God, i. e. by the word of his power, and command of his will: or as some understand it by the wind, which is the breath of God, as the thunder is his voice: it is caused by the cold freezing wind out of the north. See the effect of it: *the breadth of the waters is straitened*, i. e. the waters that had spread themselves, and flowed with a great deal of liberty, are congealed, benumbed, arrested, bound up in crystal fetters. This is such an instance of the power of God, as if it were not common would be next to a miracle.

4. In the clouds; the womb where all these watery meteors are conceived, of which he had spoken, *chap. xxxvi. 28.* Three sorts of clouds he here speaks of,

1. Close black thick clouds, pregnant with showers, and these with watering he varies, *ver. 11. i. e.* They spend themselves, and are exhausted by the rain into which they melt and are dissolved, pouring out water until they are weary and can pour out no more; see what pains, as I may say, the creatures, even those above us, take to serve man: the clouds water the earth until they are weary; they spend and are spent for our benefit; which frames and condemns us for the little good we do in our places, though it would be to our own advantage; for *he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.*

2. Bright thin clouds, clouds without water, these he scattereth, they are dispersed of themselves, and not dissolved into rain, but what goes with them we know not. The bright cloud in the evening when the sky is red, is scattered, and proves an earnest of a fair day, *Matt. xvi. 2.*

3. Flying clouds, which do not dissolve as the thick cloud into a close rain, but are carried upon the wings of the wind from place to place, dropping showers as they go, and these are said to be turned round about by his counsels, *ver. 12.* The common people say the rain goes by planets, which is as bad divinity as it is philosophy, for it is guided and governed by the counsel of God, which extends itself even to those things that seem most casual and minute, *that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them*, for the stormy winds and the clouds that are driven by them fulfil his word; and by this means he *causeth it to rain upon one city and not upon another*, *Amos iv. 7, 8.* Thus his will is done upon the face of the world in the earth, i. e. among the children of men, to whom God has an eye in all these things, of whom it is said, *that he made them to dwell on the face of all the earth*, *Acts xvii. 26.* The inferior creatures being not capable of doing moral actions are not capable of receiving rewards or punishments: but among the children of men God causeth the rain to come either for the correction of his land, or for a mercy to it, *ver. 13.* (1.) Rain sometimes turns into a judgment: it is a scourge to a sinful land: as once it was for the destruction of the whole world, so it is now often for the correction or discipline of some parts of it, by hindering seed-time and harvest, raising the waters, and damaging the fruits. Some have said that our nation has received much more prejudice by the excess of rain than by the want of it. (2.) At other times it is a blessing; it is for his land, that that may be made fruitful, and besides that which is just necessary, he gives for mercy to fatten it, and make it more fruitful. See what a necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given, may be either a great judgment or a great mercy, and without God we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam.

14. Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wonderful works of God. 15. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine? 16. Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds, the wonderful works of him which is perfect in knowledge? 17. How thy garments are warm when he quieteth the earth by the south wind? 18. Hast thou with him spread out the sky? which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass? 19. Teach us what we shall say unto him; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. 20. Shall it be

told him that I speak? if a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.

Elihu here applies himself closely to Job, desiring him to apply what he had hitherto said to himself. He begs he would hearken to this discourse, *ver. 14.* that he would pause a while; *stand still and consider the wonderful works of God.* What we hear is not likely to profit us, unless we consider it, and we are not likely to consider things fully unless we stand still, and compose ourselves to the consideration of them. The works of God being wonderful, both deserve and need our consideration, and the more consideration of them will help to reconcile us to all his providences.

Elihu for the humbling of Job shows him,

1. That he had no insight at all into natural causes, could neither see the springs of them, nor foresee the effects of them, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* Dost thou know this, and know that, which are the wonderful works of him, which is perfect in knowledge? We are here taught, (1.) The perfection of God's knowledge: it is one of the most glorious perfections of God that he is perfect in knowledge: it is omniscience. His knowledge is intuitive, he sees and doth not know by report; it is intimate and direct. He knows things truly, and not by their colours, thoroughly, and not by piece-meal. To his knowledge there is nothing distant, but all near; nothing future, but all present; nothing hid, but all open. And we ought to acknowledge this in all his wonderful works, and it is sufficient to satisfy us in those wonderful works which we know not the meaning of, that they are the works of one that knows what he doth.

(2.) The imperfection of our knowledge. The greatest philosophers are much in the dark concerning the powers and works of nature. We are a paradox to ourselves, and every thing about us is a mystery. The gravitation of bodies, and the cohesion of the parts, are most certain and yet unaccountable. It is good for us to be made sensible of our own ignorance; some have confessed it, and those that would not have betrayed it: but we must all infer from it what incompetent judges we are of the divine politics, who understand so little even of the divine mechanics. (1.) We know not what orders God has given concerning the clouds, nor what orders he will give, *ver. 15.* That is all done by determination and with design we are sure, but what is determined and what designed, and when the plan was laid we know not. God often causeth the light of his cloud to shine; in the rainbow, so some; in the lightning, so others: but did we foresee, or could we forget when he would do it? If we foresee the change of weather a few hours before, when second causes have begun to work by the weather-glass, or vulgar observation, yet how little doth that show us of the purposes of God by these changes?

(2.) We know not how the clouds are poised in the air, the balancing of them, which is one of the wonderful works of God. They are so balanced, so spread, as that they never rob us of the benefit of the sun, even the cloudy day is day: so balanced as that they do not let it once, or burst into cataracts or water-spouts: the rainbow is an intimation of God's favour in balancing the clouds so as to keep them from drowning the world. Nay, so are they balanced as that they impartially distribute their showers on the earth, so that one time or other every place has its share.

(3.) We know not how the comfortable change comes when the winter is past, *ver. 17.* (1.) How the weather becomes warm after it has been cold. We know how our garment came to be warm upon us, i. e. how we come to be warm in our clothes, by reason of the warmth of the air we breathe in. Without God's blessing we should clothe us and not be warm, *Hag. i. 6.* But when he so orders it, the clothes are warm upon us, which in the extremity of cold weather would not serve to keep us warm. (2.) How it becomes calm after it has been stormy; he quieteth the earth with the south wind, when the spring comes. As he has a blustering, freezing north-wind, so he has a thawing, composing south-wind; the Spirit is compared to both, because he both convinceth and comforteth, *Can. iv. 16.*

2. That he had no share at all in the first making of the world, *ver. 18.* Hast thou with him spread out the sky? Thou canst not pretend to have stretched it out without him, no nor to have stretched it out in conjunction with him, for he was far from needing any help, either in contriving or working. The creation of the vast expanse of the visible heavens (*Gen. i. 6, 7, 8.*) which we see in being to this day, is a glorious instance of the divine power, considering, (1.) That though it is fluid, yet it is firm: it is strong, and has its name from its stability. It still is what it was, and suffers no decay, nor shall the ordinances of heaven be altered till the lease expires with time. (2.) That though it is large, it is bright and most curiously fine; it is a molten looking-glass smooth and polished, and without the least flaw or crack: And in which as in a looking-glass we may behold the glory of God, and the wisdom of his handy work, *Psal. xix. 1.* When we look up to heaven above, we should remember it is a mirror or looking-glass, not to shew us our own faces, but to be a faint representation of the purity, dignity, and brightness of the upper world, and its glorious inhabitants.

3. That neither he nor they were able to speak of the glory of God in any proportion to the merit of the subject, *ver. 29, 30.* (1.) He challengeth Job to be their director, if he durst undertake it. He speaks it ironically. Teach us, if thou canst, what we shall say unto him: Thou hast a mind to reason with God, and wouldest have us to contend with him on thy behalf; teach us then what we shall say: Canst thou see further into this abyss than we can? If thou canst, favour us with the discoveries, furnish us with instructions. (2.) He owns his own insufficiency both in speaking to God, and in speaking of him: *We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* Note, The best of men are much in the dark concerning the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and the administrations of the divine government. They that through grace know much of God, yet it is little, it is nothing, in comparison with what is to be known, and what will be known, when that which is perfect is come, and the veil shall be rent. When we would speak of God, we speak confusedly and with great uncertainty, and are presently at a loss and run aground, not for want of matter, but want of words: and as we must always begin with fear and trembling, lest we speak amiss, (*De Deo etiam vera dicere periculosum est*) so we must conclude with shame and blushing, that we have spoken no better. Elihu himself had for his part spoken very well on God's behalf, and yet is far from expecting a fee, or thinking God was beholden to him for it, or that he was fit to be standing counsel for him, that (1.) He is even ashamed of what he has said, not of the cause, but of his own management of it. Shall it be told him that I speak? Shall it be reported to him as a meritorious piece of service worthy his notice? By no means, let it never be spoken of, for he fears the subject has suffered by his undertaking it, as a fine face is wronged by an ill painter, and his performance is so far from meriting thanks, that it needs pardon. When we have done all we can for God, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants, and have nothing at all to boast of. He is afraid of saying any more. If a man speak, if he undertake to plead for God, much more if he offers to plead against him, surely he shall be swallowed up. If he speak presumptuously, God's wrath shall soon consume



sume him, but if never so well, he will soon lose himself in the mystery, and be overpowered by the divine lustre. Astonishment will strike him blind and dumb.

21. And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth and cleanseth them. 22. Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty. 23. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict. 24. Men do therefore fear him, he respecteth not any that are wise of heart.

Elihu here concludes his discourse with some short but great sayings concerning the glory of God, as that which he was himself possessed, and desired to possess others with a holy awe of. He speaks concisely and in haste, because it should seem he perceived that God was about to take the work into his own hands.

1. He observes, that God who has said he will dwell in the thick darkness, and make that his pavilion, (2 Chron. vi. 1. Psal. xviii. 11.) is in that awful chariot advancing towards them, as if he were preparing his throne for judgment, surrounded with clouds and darkness, Psal. xlviii. 2. to ver. 9. he saw the cloud with a whirlwind in the bosom of it, coming out of the south; but now it hung so thick, so black over their heads, that they could none of them see the bright light which just before was in the clouds: The light of the sun was now eclipsed; this minded him of the darkness, by reason of which he could not speak, ver. 13. and made him afraid to go on, ver. 20. Thus the disciples feared when they entered into a cloud, Luke ix. 34, yet he looks to the north and sees clear that way, which gives him hopes that the clouds are not gathering for a deluge, they are covered, but not surrounded with them: and he expects that the wind will pass (so it may be read) and cleanse them. Such a wind as passed over the earth to clear it from the waters of Noah's flood, (Gen. viii. 1.) is token of the return of God's favour, and then fair weather will come out of the north, ver. 22. and all will be well. God will not always frown, nor contend for ever.

2. He hastens to conclude, now God is about to speak; and therefore delivers much in a few words, as the sum of all that he had been discoursing of, which, if duly considered, would not only censure the man he had been driving, but make way for what God would say.

1. That with God is terrible majesty: He is a God of glory, and such transcendent perfection as cannot but strike an awe upon all his attendants, and a terror upon all his adversaries. With God is terrible praise; so some; for he is fearful in praises, Exod. xv. 11.

2. That when we speak touching the Almighty, we must own that we cannot find him out: our finite understandings cannot comprehend his infinite perfections: Can we put the sea into an egg-shell? We cannot trace the steps he takes in his providence. His way is in the sea.

3. That he is excellent in power. It is the excellency of his power that he can do whatever he pleaseth in heaven and earth. The universal extent and irresistible force of his power, are the excellency of it: no creature has an arm like him, so long, so strong.

4. That he is no less excellent in wisdom and righteousness; in judgment and plenty of justice: else there would be little excellency in his power. He that can do every thing, we may be sure will do every thing for the best, for he is infinitely wise; and will not in any thing do wrong, for he is infinitely just. When he executes judgments upon sinners, yet there is plenty of justice in it, and he inflicts not more than they deserve.

5. That he will not afflict, i. e. he will not afflict willingly; it is no pleasure to him to grieve the children of men, much less his own children: he never afflicts but when there is a cause, and when there is need, and he doth not overburden us with affliction, but considers our frame. Some read it thus: The Almighty whom we cannot find out is great in power, but he will not afflict in judgment, and plenty of justice, nor is extreme to mark what we do amiss.

6. He values not the censures of those that are wise in their own conceit. He respecteth them not, ver. 24. He will not alter his counsels to oblige them, nor can those that prescribe to him prevail with him to do as they would have him do. He regards the prayer of the humble, but not the politics of the crafty: No, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, 1 Cor. i. 25.

Lastly, From all this it is easy to infer, that since God is great he is greatly to be feared; nay, because he is gracious and will not afflict, men do therefore fear him, for there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared, Psal. cxxx. 4. It is the duty and interest of all men to fear God: Men shall fear him; so some. Sooner or later they shall fear him. They that will not fear the Lord and his goodness, shall for ever tremble under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath.

## C H A P. XXXVIII

In most disputes the strife is who shall have the last word: Job's friends had in this controversy tamely yielded it to Job, and then he to Elihu: But after all the wranglings of the council at bar, the judge upon the bench must have the last word; so God had here, and so he will have in every controversy, for every man's judgment proceedeth from him, and by his definitive sentence every man must stand or fall, and every cause be won or lost. Job had often appealed to God, and had talked boldly how he could order his cause before him, and as a prince would go near unto him; but when God took the throne, Job had nothing to say in his own defence, but was silent before him. It is not so easy a matter as some think it to contest with the Almighty: Job's friends had sometimes appealed to God too; O that God would speak! chap. xi. 5. And now at length God doth speak, when Job by Elihu's clear and close arguings was mollified a little, and mortified, and so prepared to hear what God had to say. It is the office of ministers to prepare the way of the Lord. That which the great God designs in this discourse is to humble Job, and bring him to repent of, and to recant his passionate indecent expressions concerning God's providential dealings with him; and this he doth by calling upon Job to compare God's eternity with his own time; God's omniscience with his own ignorance, and God's omnipotence with his own impotency. 1. He begins with an awakening challenge and demand in general, ver. 2, 3. 2. He proceeds in divers particular instances and proofs of Job's utter inability to contend with God, because of his ignorance and weakness; for, (1.) He knew nothing of the founding of the earth, ver. 4—7. (2.) Nothing of the limiting of the sea, ver. 8—11. (3.) Nothing of the morning light, ver. 12—15. (4.) Nothing of the dark recesses of the sea and earth, ver. 16—21.

VOL. II. No. LXXVII\*.

(5.) Nothing of the springs in the clouds, ver. 22—27. nor the secret counsels by which they are directed. (6.) He could do nothing towards the production of the rain, or frost, or lightning, ver. 28, 29, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38. Nothing towards the directing of the stars and their influences, ver. 31—33. Nothing towards the making of his own soul, ver. 36. And lastly, he could not provide for the lions and the ravens, ver. 39—41. If in these ordinary works of nature Job was puzzled, how durst he pretend to dive into the counsels of God's government, and to judge of them? In this (as Bishop Patrick observes) God takes up the argument begun by Eliphaz, (who came nearest to the truth,) and prosecutes it in imitable words, excelling his, and all other men's, in the loftiness of the style, as much as thunder doth a whisper.

1. THEN the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 2. Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? 3. Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Let us observe here,

1. Who speaks; the Lord Jehovah, not a created angel, but the eternal Word himself, the second person in the blessed Trinity, for it is he by whom the worlds were made, and that was no other but the Son of God. The same speaks here that afterwards spoke from mount Sinai. Here he begins with the creation of the world, there with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, and from both is inferred the necessity of our subjection to him. Elihu had said that God speaks to men, and they do not perceive it, chap. xxxiii. 14. But this they could not but perceive, and yet we have a more sure word of prophecy.

2. When he spoke: Then: When they had all had their saying, and yet had not gained their point, then it was time for God to interpose, whose judgment is according to truth. When we know not what is in the sight, and perhaps are doubtful whether we ourselves are, this may teach us that God will determine shortly in the valley of decision, Jer. xli. 14. Job had silenced his three friends, and yet could not convince them of his integrity in the main; Elihu had silenced Job, and yet could not convince him to acknowledge his unmanly argument of this dispute, but only of his own and does both; convinceth Job first of his unadvised speaking, and then of him very peculiarly; and having humbled him, puts honour upon his friends by convincing his three friends that they had done him wrong. These things God will sooner or later do for his people, he will first strip off their faults, that they may be themselves ashamed of them, and he will shew others their righteousness, and bring it forth as the light, that they may be ashamed of their own defects of them.

3. How he spoke: Out of the whirlwind, the rolling revolving cloud, when Elihu took notice of, chap. xxxvii. 1, 2—9. A whirlwind preceded Ezekiel's vision, Ezek. i. 4. and Lament's, 1 King. xix. 11. God is said to have his way in the whirlwind, Naham. i. 3. and to blow that even the stormy wind fulfils his word, here it was made the vehicle of it. Thus flows what a mighty voice God's is, that it was not told, but perfectly audible, even in the noise of a whirlwind. Thus God designed to strike Job, and to command his attention. Sometimes God rebukes his own people in terrible corrections, as out of the whirlwind, but always in righteousness.

4. To whom he spoke. He answered Job, directed his speech to him, to convince him of what was amiss, before he cleared him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him. It is God only that can effectually convince of sin, and those shall be so humbled whom he designs to exalt. Those that desire to hear from God, as Job did, shall certainly hear from him at length.

5. What he said. We may here conjecture that Elihu, or some other of the auditory, wrote down verbatim what was delivered out of the whirlwind, for we find, Rev. x. 4. that when thunders uttered their voices, John was prepared to write: Or if it were not written then, yet the penman of the book being inspired of the Holy Ghost, we are sure that we have here a very true and exact report of what was said: The Spirit, (saith Christ) shall bring you to remembrance, as he did here, what I have said to you.

The preface is very searching.

1. God charges him with ignorance and presumption in what he had said, ver. 2. Who is this that talks at this rate? Is it Job? What, a man? the weak foolish despicable creature, shall he pretend to prescribe to me what I must do, or to quarrel with me for what I have done? Is it Job? what my servant Job? a perfect and an upright man? Can he so far forget himself, and act unlike himself? who, where is he, that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge? Let him shew his face if he dare, and stand to what he hath said. Note, Darkening the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly, is a great affront and provocation to God. Concerning God's counsels, we must own that we are without knowledge. They are a deep which we cannot fathom, we are quite out of our element, out of our aim, when we pretend to account for them: And we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them, with a great deal of niceness and boldness: but alas, we do but darken them instead of explaining them, we confound and perplex ourselves and one another, when we dispute of the order of God's decrees, and the designs and reasons and methods of his operations of providence and grace. A humble faith and sincere obedience, shall see farther and better into the secret of the Lord, than all the philosophy of their school, and the searches of science so called. This first word which God spoke is the more observable, because Job in his repentance fastens upon it as that which did his business, and humbled him, chap. xlii. 3. This he repeated and echoed to, as the arrow that stuck fast in him: I am the fool that has darkened counsel. There was some colour to have turned it upon Elihu, as if God meant him, for he spoke last, and was speaking when the whirlwind began, but Job applied it to himself, as becomes us to do when faithful reproofs are given, and not (as most do) to billet them upon other people.

2. He challenges him to give such proofs of his knowledge, as would serve to justify his inquiries into the divine counsels, ver. 3. Gird up now thy loins like a stout man; prepare thyself for the encounter, I will demand of thee, will put some questions to thee, and answer me if thou canst, before I answer thine. Those that go about to call God to an account, must expect to be catechised and called to an account themselves, that they may be made sensible of their ignorance and arrogance. God here puts Job in mind of what he had said, chap. xiii. 22. Call them, and I will answer: Now make thy words good.

4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. 5. Who hath



hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof? 7. When the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. 8. Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb? 9. When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it. 10. And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors. 11. And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.

For the humbling of Job, God here shews him his ignorance even concerning the earth and the sea. Though so near, though so bulky, yet he could give no account of their origination; much less of heaven above or hell beneath, which are at such a distance, or of the several parts of matter which are so minute, and then least of all of the divine counsels.

1. Concerning the founding of the earth. If he have such a mighty insight, as he pretends to have, into the counsels of God, let him give some account of the earth he goes upon, which is given to the children of men.

(1.) Let him tell where he was when this lower world was made, and whether he was advising or assisting in that wonderful work, *ver. 4. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?* Thy pretensions are high, canst thou pretend to this? Wast thou present when the world was made? See here, (1.) The greatness and glory of God; *I laid the foundations of the earth.* This proves him to be the only living and true God, and a God of power, *Ish. xl. 21. Jer. x. 11, 12.* and encourageth us to trust in him at all times, *Ish. li. 13, 16.* (2.) The meanness, and contemptibleness of man. *Where wast thou then?* Thou that hast made such a figure among the children of the east, and settest up for an oracle, and a judge of the divine counsels, where wast thou when the foundations of the earth were laid; So far were we from having any hand in the creation of the world, which might entitle us to a dominion in it, or so much as being witnesses of it, by which we might have gained an insight into it, that we were not then in being. The first man was not, much less were we. It is the honour of Christ that he was present when this was done, *Prov. viii. 22. &c. John i. 1, 2. But we are of yesterday, and know nothing.* Let us not therefore find fault with the works of God, nor prescribe to him: He did not consult us in making the world, and yet it is well made; why should we expect then that he should take his measures from us in governing it?

(2.) Let him describe how this world was made, and give a particular account of the manner and method in which this strong and stately edifice was formed and erected: Declare, if thou hast so much understanding as thou fanciest thyself to have, what were the advances of that work. Those that pretend to have understanding above others, ought to give proof of it: shew me thy faith by thy works, thy knowledge by thy words. Let Job declare if he can,

1. How the world came to be so finely framed, with so much exactness, and such an admirable symmetry and proportion of all the parts of it, *ver. 5. Stand forth and tell who made the measures thereof, and stretched out the line upon it.* Wast thou the architect that didst form the model, and then draw the dimensions by rule according to it? The vast bulk of the earth is moulded as regularly as if it had been done by line and measure; but who can describe how it was cast into this figure? Who can determine its circumference and diameter, and all the lines that are drawn on the terrestrial globe? It is to this day a dispute whether the earth stands still or turns round, how then can we determine by what measures it was first formed?

2. How it came to be so firmly fixed. Though it is hung upon nothing, yet it is established that it cannot be moved; but who can tell upon what the foundations of it are fastened, that it may not sink with its own weight? or who laid the corner-stone thereof, that the parts of it may not fall asunder, *ver. 6. What God doth it shall be for ever, Eccles. iii. 14.* And therefore as we cannot find fault with God's work, so we need not be in fear concerning it, it will last and answer the end, the works of his providence, as well as the work of creation; the measures of neither can ever be broke; and the work of redemption is no less firm, of which Christ himself is both the foundation and the corner-stone. The church stands as fast as the earth.

(3.) Let him repeat if he can, the songs of praise which were sung at that solemnity, *ver. 7. When the morning stars sang together,* the blessed angels, the First-born of the Father of light, who in the morning of time shone so bright as the morning-star, going immediately before the light which God commanded to shine out of darkness upon the seeds of this lower world, the earth, which was without form and void. They were the sons of God which shouted for joy, when they saw the foundations of the earth laid, because though it was not made for them but for the children of men, and though it would increase their work and service, yet they knew the eternal wisdom and word, whom they were to worship, (*Jeb. i. 6*) would rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and much of his delight would be in the sons of men, *Prov. viii. 31.* The angels are called the sons of God, because they bear much of his image, are with him in his house above, and serve him as a son doth his father. Now observe here, (1.) The glory of God as the creator of the world, is to be celebrated with joy and triumph by all his reasonable creatures; for they are qualified and appointed to be the collectors of his praises from the inferior creature, who can only praise him objectively. (2.) The work of angels is to praise God; and the more we abound in holy, humble, thankful, joyful praise, the more we do the will of God as they do it, and when we are so barren and destructive in praising God, it is a comfort to think that they are doing it in a better manner. (3.) They were unanimous in singing God's praises: they sung together with one accord, and there was no jar in their harmony. The sweetest concerts are in praising God. (4.) They all did it, even those that afterwards fell, and lost their first estate; even those who have praised God, may by the deceitful power of sin be brought to blaspheme him, and yet God will be eternally praised.

2. Concerning the limiting of the sea to the place appointed for it, *ver. 8. &c.* This refers to the third day's work, when God said, *Gen. i. 9. Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so.*

(1.) Out of the great deep or chaos, in which earth and water were intermixed, in obedience to the divine command the waters break forth like a child out of the teeming womb, *ver. 8.* Then the waters that had covered the deep and stood among the mountains, retired with precipitation. At God's rebuke they fled, *Psal. civ. 6, 7.*

(2.) This new-born babe is clothed and swaddled, *ver. 9.* The cloud is

made the garment thereof, with which it is covered, and thick darkness, *i. e.* shores vastly remote and distant from one another, and quite in the dark one to another, are a swaddling band for it. See with what care the great God manageth the raging sea: notwithstanding the violence of its tides and strength of its billows, he manageth it as the nurse doth the child in swaddling clothes. It is not said he made rocks and mountains its swaddling bands, but clouds and darkness; something that we are not aware of, and would think least likely for such a purpose.

(3.) There is a cradle too provided for this babe, *I brake up for it my decreed place, ver. 10.* Valleys were sunk for it in the earth, capacious enough to receive it, and there it is laid to sleep, and if it be sometimes tossed with winds, that (as Bishop Patrick observes) is but the rocking of the cradle, which makes it sleep the sifter. As for the sea, so for every one of us there is a decreed place, for he that determined the times before appointed, determined also the bounds of our habitation.

(4.) This babe being made unruly and dangerous by the sin of man, which was the original of all unquietness and danger in this lower world, there is also a prison provided for it; *bars and doors are set, ver. 10.* And it is said to it by way of check to its insolence, *Hitherto shalt thou come but no further.* The sea is God's, for he made it, he restrains it; he saith to it, *Here shall thy proud waves be stayed, ver. 11.* This may be considered as an act of God's power over the sea, though so vast a body, and its motion sometimes extremely violent, yet God has it under check, its waves rise no higher; its tides roll no further than God permits, and it is mentioned as a reason why we should stand in awe of God, *Jer. v. 22.* and yet why we should encourage ourselves in him, for he that stops the noise in the sea, even the noise of her waves, can when he pleases still the tumult of the people, *Psal. lxxv. 7.* It is also to be looked upon as an act of God's mercy to the world of mankind, and an instance of his patience towards that provoking race; though he could easily cover the earth again with the waters of the sea (and methinks every flowing tide twice a day threatens us, and shews what the sea could do and would do, if God would give it leave) yet he restrains them, being not willing that they should perish, and having reserved the world that now is unto fire, *2 Pet. iii. 7.*

12. Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days? and causes the day-spring to know his place. 13. That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? 14. It is turned as clay to the seal, and they stand as a garment. 15. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken. 16. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depth? 17. Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? 18. Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare, if thou knowest it all. 19. Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof? 20. That thou shouldest take it to be bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof? 21. Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? or because the number of his days is great. 22. Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail. 23. Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war? 24. By what way is the light parted, which scattereth that east-wind upon the earth?

The Lord here proceeds to ask Job a great many very puzzling questions, to convince him of his ignorance, and so to shame him for his folly in prescribing to God. If we will but pose ourselves with such interrogatories as these, we should soon be brought to own that what we know, is nothing in comparison with that which we know not.

Job is here challenged to give an account of six things.

1. Of the springs of the morning, the day-spring from on high, *ver. 12, 13, 14, 15.* As there is no visible being of which we may be more firmly assured that it is, so there is none which we are more puzzled at describing, nor more doubtful in determining what it is, than the light. We welcome the morning, and are glad of the day-spring; but, (1.) It is not commanded since our days, but what it is it was long before we were born, so that it was neither made by us, nor designed primarily for us, but we take it as we find it, and as the many generations had it that went before us. The day-spring knew its place before we knew ours, for we are but of yesterday. (2.) It was not we, it was not any man that commanded the morning light at first, nor appointed the place of its springing up and shining forth, nor the time of it. The constant and regular succession of day and night, was no contrivance of ours, it is the glory of God that it shews, and his handy work not ours, *Psal. xix. 1, 2.* (3.) It is quite out of our power to alter this course. *Hast thou countermanded the morning since thy days?* Hast thou at any time raised the morning light sooner than its appointed time, to serve thy purpose when thou hast waited for the morning, or ordered the day-spring for thy convenience to any other place but its own? no, never: Why then wilt thou pretend to direct the divine counsels, or expect to have the methods of providence altered in favour of thee? We may as soon break the covenant of the day and of the night, as any part of God's covenant with his people, and particularly that *I will chasten them with the rod of men.* (4.) It is God that has appointed the day-spring to visit the earth; and diffuseth the morning light through the air, which receives it as readily as the clay doth the seal (*ver. 14.*) immediately admitting the impressions of it, so as of a sudden to be all over enlightened by it, as the seal stamps its image on the wax; and they stand as a garment, or as if they were clothed with a garment. The earth puts on a new face every morning, and dresseth itself as we do, puts on light as a garment, and is then to be seen. (5.) This is made a terror to evil doers. Nothing more comfortable to mankind than the light of the morning, it is pleasant to the eyes, it is serviceable to life and the business of it, and the favour of it is universally extended, for it takes hold of the ends of the earth; and how welcome it is to the earth, is what we should dwell upon in our hymns to the light: but God here observes how unwelcome it is to those that do evil, and therefore hate the light. God makes the light a minister of his justice as well as of his mercy; it is designed to shake the wicked out of the earth, and for that purpose it takes hold of the ends of it, as we take hold of the ends of a garment to shake the dust and moths out of it. Job had observed what a terror the morning light is to criminals, because it discovers them.



chap. xxiv. 13, &c. and God here seconds the observation, and asks him whether the world was indebted to him for that kindness? No, the great Judge of the world sends forth the beams of the morning light, as his messengers to detect criminals, that they may not only be defeated in their purposes, and put to shame; but that they may be brought to condign punishment, *ver. 15.* that their light may be withholden from them, lose their comfort, their confidence, their liberties, their lives, and that their high arm, which they have lifted up against God and man, may be broken, and they deprived of their power to do mischief. Whether what is here said of the morning light was designed to represent, as in a figure, the light of the gospel of Christ, and to give a type of it, I will not say, but I am sure it may serve to put us in mind of the encomiums given to the gospel just at the rising of its morning star, by Zecharias in his *Benedictus*, *Luke i. 78.* By the tender mercy of our God the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, whose hearts are turned to it as clay to the seal, *2 Cor. iv. 6.* And by the Virgin Mary in her Magnificat, *Luke i. 51.* shewing that God in his gospel hath shewed strength with his arm, scattered the proud, and put down the mighty, by that light he designeth to shake the wicked, to shake wickedness itself out of the earth, and break its high arm.

2. Of the springs of the sea, *ver. 16.* *Hast thou entered into them, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?* Knowest thou what lies in the bottom of the sea, the treasures there hid in the sands? or canst thou give an account of the rise and original of the waters of the sea? Vapours are continually exhaled out of the sea: Dost thou know how the recruits are raised by which it is continually supplied? Rivers are constantly poured into the sea: Dost thou know how they are continually discharged, so as not to overflow the earth? Art thou acquainted with the secret subterraneous passages by which the waters circulate? God's way in the government of the world is said to be *in the sea, and in the great waters*, *Psal. lxxvii. 19.* intimating that it is hid from us, and not to be pried into by us.

3. Of the gates of death: *Have those been open to thee?* *ver. 16.* Death is a grand secret. (1.) We know not before-hand when and how, and by what means we or others shall be brought to death; by what road we must go the way whence we shall not return; what disease or what disaster will be the door to let us into the house appointed for all living: *Man knows not his time.* (2.) We cannot describe what death is, how the knot is untied between body and soul, nor how the spirit of man goes upward, *Eccles. iii. 21.* to be we know not what, and to live we know not how, as Mr. Norris expresseth it: with what dreadful curiosity (saith he) doth the soul launch out into the vast ocean of eternity, and resign to an untried abyss? Let us make it sure that the gates of heaven shall be opened to us on the other side death, and then we need not fear the opening of the gates of death, though it is a way we are to go but once. (3.) We have no correspondence at all with separate souls, nor any acquaintance with their state. It is an unknown, undiscovered region to which they are removed, we can neither hear from them, nor send to them. While we are here in a world of sense, we speak of the world of spirits, as blind men do of colours, and when we remove thither, shall be amazed to find how much we were mistaken.

4. Of the breadth of the earth, *ver. 11.* *Hast thou perceived that?* The knowledge of this might seem most level to him, and within his reach, yet he is challenged to declare this if he can: We have our residence on the earth, God has given it to the children of men: but who ever surveyed it, or could give an account of the number of its acres? It is but a point to the universe, yet as small as it is, we cannot be exact in declaring the dimensions of it. Job had never sailed round the world, nor any before him; so little did men know of the breadth of the earth, that it was but a few ages ago that the vast continent of America was discovered, which had time out of mind laid hid. The divine perfection is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, it is therefore presumption for us, who perceive not the breadth of the earth to dive into the depth of God's counsels.

5. Of the place and way of light and darkness. Of the day-spring he had spoken before, *ver. 12.* and he returns to speak to it again, *ver. 19.* *Where is the way where light dwells?* and again, *ver. 24.* *By what way is the light parted?* He challengeth him to describe,

1. How the light and darkness were at first made; when God in the beginning first spread darkness upon the face of the deep, and afterwards commanded the light to shine out of darkness, by that mighty word, *Let there be light*, was Job a witness to the order, to the operation: can he tell where the fountains of light and darkness are, and where those mighty princes keep their courts distinct, while in one world they rule alternately? Though we long ever so much either for the shining forth of the morning, or the shadows of the evening, we know not whither to send or go to fetch them, nor can tell *the paths to the house thereof*, *ver. 20.* We were not then born, nor is the number of our days so great that we can describe the birth of the first-born of the visible creation, *ver. 21.* Shall we then undertake to discourse of God's counsels, which were from eternity, or to find out the paths to the house thereof, to solicit for the alteration of them? God glories in it that he forms the light and creates the darkness, and if we must take those as we find them, take those as they come and quarrel with neither, but make the best of both; then we must in like manner accommodate ourselves to the peace and the evil which God likewise created, *Isa. xlv. 7.*

2. How they still keep their turns interchangeably. It is God that makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice, *Psal. lxxv. 8.* for it is his order, and no order of ours, that is executed by the outgoings of the morning light and the darkness of the night. We cannot so much as tell from whence they come, or whither they go, *ver. 24.* *By what way is the light parted* in the morning, when in an instant it shoots itself into all the parts of the air above the horizon, as if the morning light flew upon the wings of an east wind, so swiftly, so strongly; is it carried, scattering the darkness of the light, as the east wind doth the clouds? Hence we read of *the wings of the morning*, *Psal. cxxxix. 9.* on which the light is conveyed to the utmost parts of the earth, and scattered like an east-wind upon the earth. It is a mighty change that passeth over us every morning by the return of the light, and every evening by the return of the darkness, but we expect them, and so they are no surprise or uneasiness to us: If we would in like manner count upon changes in our outward condition, we should neither in the brightest noon count upon perpetual day, nor in the darkest midnight despair of the return of the morning: God hath set the one over against the other, like the day and night, and so must we, *Eccles. vii. 14.*

6. Of the treasures of the snow and hail, *ver. 22, 23.* Hast thou entered into those, and taken a view of them? In the clouds the snow and hail are generated, and thence they come in such abundance, that one would think there were treasures of them laid up in store there, whereas indeed they are suddenly produced, *extempore*, as I may say, and *pro re nata*. And sometimes they come so opportunely to serve the purposes of providence, in God's fighting for his people, and against his and their enemies, that one would think they were laid up as magazines, or stores of arms, ammunition and provisions, against the time of trouble, the day of battle and war; when God will either contend with the world in general, as in the deluge, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters fetched out of these treasures to drown a wicked world, that waged war with heaven, or

with some particular persons or parties, as when God out of these treasures fetched great hail-stones wherewith to fight against the Canaanites, *Jos. x. 11.* See what folly it is to strive against God, who is thus prepared for battle and war, and how much it is our interest to make our peace with him, and to keep ourselves in his love. God can fight as effectually with snow and hail, if he pleases, as with thunder and lightning, or the sword of an angel!

25. Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters? or a way for the lightning of thunder. 26. To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is: on the wilderness where there is no man? 27. To satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth? 28. Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew? 29. Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? 30. The waters are hid as with a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen. 31. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? 32. Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? 33. Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? 34. Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? 35. Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? 36. Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? 37. Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, 38. When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together? 39. Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, 40. When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? 41. Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

Hitherto God had put such questions to Job, as were proper to convince him of his ignorance and short-sightedness. Now he comes in the same manner to shew his impotency and weakness: As it is but little that he knows, and therefore he ought to arraign the divine counsels, so it is but little he can do, and therefore he ought not to oppose the proceedings of providence. Let him consider what great things God doth, and try whether he can do the like, or whether he thinks himself an equal match for him.

1. God has thunder and lightning, and rain, and frost at command, but Job has not, and therefore let him not dare to compare with God or to contest with him. Nothing is more uncertain than what weather it shall be, nor more out of our reach to appoint, but it shall be what weather pleaseth God, nor what pleaseth us, unless as becomes us, whatever pleaseth God pleaseth us. Concerning this, observe here, 1. How great God is. (1.) He has a sovereign dominion over the waters, has appointed them their course, even then when they seem to overflow, and to be from under his check, *ver. 25.* He has divided a water-course, directs the rain where to fall, even when the shower is most violent, with as much certainty as if it were conveyed by canals or conduit-pipes: thus the hearts of kings are said to be in God's hands, and as the rains, those rivers of God, he turneth them whithersoever he will. Every drop goes as it is directed. God has sworn, that the waters of Noah shall no more return to cover the earth: And we see he is able to make good what he has promised, for he has the rain in a water-course. (2.) He hath also over the lightning and the thunder, which go not at random, but in the way that he directs them. And they are mentioned here because he prepares the lightnings for the rain, *Psal. cxxxv. 7.* Let not those that fear God be afraid of the lightning or the thunder, for they are not blind bullets, but go the way that God himself directs them, who means no hurt to them. (3.) In directing the course of the rain he doth not neglect the wilderness nor the desert land, *ver. 26, 27. where no man is:* (1.) No man to be employed in taking care of the products. God's providences reaches farther than man's industry: if he had not more kindness for many of the inferior creatures than man has, it would go ill with them. God can make the earth fruitful without any art or pains of ours, as *Gen. ii. 5, 6.* when there was not a man to till the ground, yet there went up a mist and watered it: But we cannot make it fruitful without God, it is he that gives the increase. (2.) Where there is no man to be provided for, or to take the benefit of the fruits that are produced. Though God doth with a very peculiar favour visit and regard man, yet he doth not overlook the inferior creatures, but causeth the bud of the tender herb to spring forth for food for all flesh, as well as for the service of man. Even the wild asses shall have their thirst quenched, *Psal. civ. 11.* God has enough for all, and wonderfully provides even for those creatures, that man neither hath service from, nor makes provision for. (4.) He is in a sense the father of the rain, *ver. 28.* It has no other father: He produced it by his power, he governs and directs it, and makes what use he pleaseth of it: Even the small drops of the dew he distils upon the earth, as the God of nature, and as the God of grace rains righteousness upon us, and is himself as the dew unto Israel, see *Ios. xiv. 5, 6. Mic. v. 7.* (5.) The ice and the frost by which the waters are congealed and the earth incrustrated, are produced by his providence, *ver. 29, 30.* These are very common things, which lessens the strangeness of them: But considering what a mighty change is made by them in a very little time, how the waters are hid as with a stone, as with a grave stone laid upon them: So thick, so strong is the ice that covers them, that the face even of the deep is sometimes frozen. We may well ask, Out of whose womb comes the ice? What created power could produce such a wonderful work? No power but that of the Creator himself. Frost and snow come from him, and therefore should lead our thoughts and meditations to him who doth such great things past finding out: And we shall the easier bear the inconveniences of the winter weather if we learn to make this good use of it. 2. Observe, How weak man is; can he do such things as these? could Job? No, *ver. 35, 36.* (1.) He cannot command one shower of rain for the relief of himself or his friends. Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, those bottles of heaven, that abundance of waters may cover thee, to water thy fields when they are dry and parched? If we lift up our voice to God



to pray for rain we may have it, *Zech. x. 1.* But if we lift up our voice to the clouds, to demand it, they will soon tell us they are not at our beck, and we shall go without it, *Jer. xiv. 22.* The heavens will not hear the earth, unless God hear them, *Hos. ii. 21.* See what poor indigent depending creatures we are, we cannot do without rain, nor can we have it when we will. (2.) He cannot commission one flash of lightning, if he had a mind to make use of it for the terror of his enemies, *ver. 35.* *Canst thou send lightnings that they may go on thine errand, and do the execution thou wishest for? Will they come at thy call, and say unto thee, Here we are? No, the ministers of God's wrath will not be the ministers of ours: Why should they, since the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God? see Luke ix. 55.*

2. God has the stars of heaven under his command and cognisance, and that we have not. Our meditations are now to rise higher, far above the clouds, to the glorious lights above. He instanzeth not in the planets, which move in lower orbs, but in the fixed stars, which are much higher. It is supposed that they have an influence upon this earth, notwithstanding their vast distance, not upon the minds of men, or the events of providence: Mens fate is not determined by their stars, but upon the ordinary course of nature, they are set for signs and seasons, for days and years, *Gen. i. 14.* And if the stars have such a dominion over this earth, as it is called here, *ver. 33.* though they have their place in the heavens, and are but mere matter, much more has he who is their maker, and ours, and who is an eternal mind. Now see how weak we are, (1.) We cannot alter the influences of the stars, *ver. 31.* not theirs that are instrumental to produce the pleasures of the spring, *Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?* the seven stars, that constellation which lies in so small a compass (none in less) and yet sheds very benign influences upon the earth: Nor can we alter theirs that introduce the rigour of the winter: *Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?* that magnificent constellation that makes so great a figure, (none greater) dispenseth rough and unpleasing influences, which we cannot control or repel. Both summer and winter will have their course; God can change them when he pleaseth, can make the spring cold, and so bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, and the winter warm, and so loose the bands of Orion, but we cannot. (2.) It is not in our power to order the motions of the stars, nor are we entrusted with the conduct of them. God, who *calleth the stars by their names*, *Psal. cxlvii. 4.* calls them forth in their respective seasons, appoints them the time of their rising and setting; but this is none of our province, we cannot bring forth Mazzaroth, the stars in the southern signs, nor guide Arcturus, those in the northern, *ver. 32.* God can bring forth the stars to battle, as he did when in their courses they fought against Siferu, and guide them in the attacks they are ordered to make; but man cannot do so. (3.) We are not only unconcerned in the government of the stars, (the government they are under, and the government they are intrusted with, for they both rule and are ruled) but utterly unacquainted with it, we *know not the ordinances of heaven*, *ver. 33.* So far are we from being able to change them, that we can give no account of them: They are a secret to us: Shall we then pretend to know God's counsels, and the reasons of them? If it were left to us to set the dominion of the stars upon the earth, we should soon be at a loss. Shall we then teach God how to govern the world?

1. God is the author and giver, the father and fountain of all wisdom and understanding, *ver. 36.* The souls of men are nobler, and more excellent beings than the stars of heaven themselves and shine brighter: The powers and faculties of reason with which man is endued, and the wonderful performances of thought, bring him into some alliance to the blessed angels, and whence comes this light but from the Father of lights? Who but he hath put wisdom into the inward parts of man, and given understanding to the heart? (1.) The rational soul itself and its capacities come from him as the God of nature, for he formeth the spirit of man within him. We did not make our own souls, nor can we describe how they act, or how they are united to our bodies. He only that made them knows them, and knows how to manage them; he fashioneth mens hearts alike in some things and yet unlike in others. (2.) True wisdom, its furniture and improvement come from him as the God of grace, and the founder of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, who have all our wisdom from him? Nay, shall we pretend to be wise above our sphere, and beyond the limits which he that gave us our understanding sets to it? He designed we should with it serve God and do our duty, but never intended we should with it set up for directors of the stars or the lightning.

4. God has the clouds under his cognisance and government, but so have not we, *ver. 37.* Can any man with all his wisdom undertake to number the clouds? or (as it may be read) to declare and describe the nature of them? Though they are near us, in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance: And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that *the dust grows into solid mire, and the clods cleave fast together*, *ver. 38.* *Who can stay the bottles of heaven? Who can stop them, that it may not always rain?* The power and goodness of God is herein to be acknowledged, that he gives the earth rain enough, but doth not surfeit it; softens it, but does not drown it; makes it fit for the plough, but not unfit for the seed. As we cannot command a shower of rain, so we cannot command a fair day without God, so necessary, so constant is our dependence upon him.

5. God provides food for the inferior creatures, and it is by his providence, not by any care or pains of ours, that they are fed. The following chapter is wholly taken up with the instances of God's power and goodness about animals, and therefore some transfer the three last verses of this chapter to it, which speak of the provision made,

1. For the lions, *ver. 39, 40.* Thou dost not pretend that the clouds and stars have any dependence upon thee for they are above thee; but on the earth thou thinkest thyself paramount, let us try that then; *Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?* Thou valuest thyself upon thy possessions of cattle which thou wast once owner of, the oxen, and asses, and camels that were fed at thy crib: But wilt thou undertake the maintenance of the lions and the young lion, when they couch in their dens, waiting for a prey? No, thou needest not do it, they can shift for themselves without thee: thou canst not do it, for thou hast not wherewithal to satisfy them: thou darest not do it, shouldst thou come to feed them, they would be upon thee: But I do it. See the all-sufficiency of the divine providence: It has wherewithal to satisfy the desire of every living thing, even the most ravenous. See the bounty of the divine providence, that wherever it has given life will give livelihood, even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable but dangerous to man: And see its sovereignty, that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures: the harmless sheep are torn to pieces to fill the appetite of the young lions, who yet sometimes are made to lack and suffer hunger, to punish them for their cruelty, while those that fear God want no good thing.

2. For the young ravens, *ver. 41.* As ravenous beasts so ravenous birds are fed by the divine providence. Who but God provides for the raven

his food? Man doth not, he takes care only of those creatures that are or may be useful to him: But God has a regard to all the works of his hands, even the meanest and least valuable. The ravens, young ones, are in a special manner necessitous, and God supplies them, *Psal. cxlvii. 9.* God's feeding the fowls, especially these fowls, (*Matt. vi. 26.*) is an encouragement to us to trust him for our daily bread. See here, (1.) What distress the young ravens are often in, they wander for lack of meat: The old ones they say, neglect them, and do not provide for them as other birds do for their young: and indeed those that are ravenous to others, are commonly barbarous to their own, and unnatural. (2.) What they are supposed to do in that distress, they cry, for they are noisy, clamorous creatures, and this is interpreted crying to God: It being the bond of nature, it is looked upon as directed to the God of nature. The putting of so favourable a construction as this upon the cries of the young ravens may encourage us in our prayers, though we can but cry Abba, Father. (3.) What God doth for them. Some way or other he provides for them, so that they grow up and come to maturity. And he that takes this care of the young ravens, certainly will not be wanting to his people or theirs. This being but one instance of many of the divine compassion, may give us occasion to think how much good our God doth every day beyond what we are aware of.

## C H A P. XXXIX.

God proceeds here to shew Job what little reason he had to charge him with unkindness, who was so compassionate to the inferior creatures, and took such a tender care of them; or to boast of himself, and his own good deeds before God, which were nothing to the divine mercies: He shews him also what great reason he had to be humble, who knew so little of the nature of the creatures about him, and had so little influence upon them, and to submit to that God on whom they all depend. He discourseth particularly, (1.) Concerning the wild goats and the hinds, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) Concerning the wild ass, *ver. 5—8.* (3.) Concerning the unicorn, *ver. 8—12.* (4.) Concerning the peacock, *ver. 13.* (5.) Concerning the ostrich, *ver. 13—18.* (6.) Concerning the horse, *ver. 19—25.* (7.) Concerning the hawk and the eagle, *ver. 26—30.*

1. **K**NOWEST thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? 2. Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? 3. They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. 4. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn: they go forth, and return not unto them. 5. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? 6. Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. 7. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. 8. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. 9. Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? 10. Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? 11. Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? 12. Wilt thou believe him that he will bring home thy feed, and gather it into thy barn?

God here shews Job what little acquaintance he had with the untamed creatures that run wild in the deserts, and lived at large, but were the care of the divine providence. As,

1. The wild goats and the hinds. That which is taken notice of concerning them is, the bringing forth, and bringing up of their young ones. For as every individual is fed, so every species of animals is preserved by the care of the divine providence, and for ought we know, none extinct to this day. Observe here,

1. Concerning the production of their young. (1.) Man is wholly ignorant of the time when they bring forth, *ver. 1, 2.* Shall we pretend to tell what is in the womb of providence, or what a day will bring forth, who know not the time of the pregnancy of a hind, or a wild goat? (2.) Though they bring forth their young with a great deal of difficulty and sorrow, and have no assistance from man, yet by the good providence of God they get through it, their young ones are safely produced, and their sorrows cast out and forgotten, *ver. 3.* Some think it is intimated, *Psal. xxix. 9.* that God by thunder helps the hind in calving. Let it be observed for the comfort of women in labour, that God helps even the hinds to bring forth their young, and shall he not much more succour them, and save them in child-bearing, who are his children in covenant with them?

2. Concerning the growth of their young, *ver. 4.* They are in good liking, though they are brought forth in sorrow, after their dams have suckled them a while, they shift for themselves in the corn fields, and are no more burdensome to them; which is an example to children when they are grown up, not to be always hanging upon their parents, and craving from them, but to put forth themselves to get their own livelihood, and to requite their parents.

2. The wild ass. A creature we frequently read of in scripture; some say untameable: Man is said to be born as the wild ass's colt, so hard to be governed. Three things providence has allotted to the wild ass. (1.) An unbounded liberty, *ver. 5.* Who, but God, hath sent out the wild ass free? He hath given a disposition to it, and therefore a dispensation for it. The tame ass is bound to labour, the wild ass has no bonds on him. Note, Freedom from service and liberty to range at pleasure is but the privilege of a wild ass: It is a pity any of the children of men should covet it, or value themselves by it. It is better to labour and be good for something, than ramble and be good for nothing. But if among men providence set some at liberty, and suffers them to live at ease, while others are doomed to servitude, we must not marvel at the matter, it is so among the brute creatures. (2.) An uninclosed lodging, *ver. 6.* Whose house I have made the wilderness where he has room enough to traverse his ways, and snuff up the wind at his pleasure, as the wild ass is said to do, *Jer. ii. 24.* as if he were to live upon the air, for it is the barren land that is his dwelling. Observe, The



The tame ass that labours and is serviceable to man, has his master's crib to go to both for shelter and food, and lives in a fruitful land: But the wild ass that will have his liberty must have it in a barren land: He that will not labour, let him not eat. He that will, shall eat the labour of his hands, and have also to give to him that needeth. Jacob the shepherd has good red pasture to spare, when Esau a sportsman was ready to perish for hunger. A farther description of the liberty and livelihood of the wild ass we have, *ver.* 7, 8. (1.) He has no owner, nor will he be in subjection; he scorneth the multitude of the city: If they attempt to take him, and in order to that surround him with a multitude, he will soon get clear of them, and the crying of the drivers is nothing to him. He laughs at those that live in the tumult and bustle of cities, (so bishop Patrick) thinking himself happier in the wilderness; and opinion is the rate of things. (2.) Having no owner he has no feeder, nor is any provision made for him, but he must shift for himself; the range of the mountains is his pasture, and a bare pasture it is; there he searcheth after here and there a green thing as he can find it and pick it up; whereas the labouring asses have green things in plenty, without their searching for them. From the untameableness of this and other creatures, we may infer how unfit we are to give law to providence who cannot give law even to a wild ass's colt.

3. The unicorn. *Rhem.* A strong creature, *Numb.* xxiii. 22. a stately proud creature, *Psal.* xcii. 10. He is able to serve, but not willing, and God here challenges Job to force him to it: Job expected every thing should be just as he would have it. Since thou dost pretend (saith God) to bring every thing to thy bow, begin with the unicorn, and try thy skill upon him. Now thine oxen and asses are all gone, try whether he will be willing to serve thee in their stead, (*ver.* 9.) and whether he will take up with the provision thou usest to make for them: *Will he abide by the crib?* No, (1.) Thou canst not tame him, nor bind him with his band, nor let him to draw the harrow, *ver.* 10. There are creatures that are willing to serve man, and seem to take a pleasure in it, and to have a love for their masters; but there are such as will never be brought to it; and it is the effect of sin; man is revolted from his subjection to his Maker; and is therefore justly punished with the revolt of the inferior creatures from their subjection to him; and yet, as an instance of God's good-will to man, there are some that are still serviceable to him. Though the wild bull (which some think is meant here by the unicorn) will not serve man, nor submit to his hand in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not *ferie nature*, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whom his service is intitled. *Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him?* (2.) Thou dar'st not trust him: though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost with thine asses or oxen, whom a little child may lead or drive, leaving to them all the pains. Thou wilt never depend upon the wild bull, as likely to come to thy harvest work, much less to go through it, to bring home thy feed, and gather it into thy barn, *ver.* 11, 12. And because he will not serve about the corn, he wants the many good bits which the tame ox hath, whose mouth was not to be muzzled in treading out the corn: But therefore he will not draw the plough, because he that made him never designed him for it. A disposition to labour is as much the gift of God as an ability for it. And it is a great mercy, if where God gives strength for service, he gives a heart: and it is what we should pray for, and reason ourselves into, which the brutes cannot do; for as among beasts, so among men, those may justly be reckoned wild and abandoned to the deserts, that have no mind either to take pains, or to do good.

13. Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? 14. Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust. 15. And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. 16. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear; 17. Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding. 18. What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.

The ostrich is a wonderful animal, a very large bird, but never flies. Some have called it a winged camel. God here gives an account of it, and observes,

1. Something that it has in common with the peacock, and that is his beautiful feathers; *ver.* 13. *Gavest thou proud wings unto the peacock?* So some read it; fine feathers make proud birds: The peacock is an emblem of pride, when he struts and shews his fine feathers. Solomon, in all his glory, is not arrayed like him. The ostrich too has goodly feathers, and yet a foolish bird. For wisdom doth not always go along with beauty and gaiety. Other birds do not envy the peacock or the ostrich their gaudy colours, nor complain for want of them; why then should we repine, if we see others wear better clothes than we can afford to wear? God gives his gifts variously, and those gifts are not always the most valuable, that make the finest shew. Who would not rather have the voice of the nightingale, than the tail of the peacock; the eye of the eagle, and her soaring wing, and the natural affection of the stork, than the beautiful wings and feathers of the ostrich that can never rise above the earth, and is without natural affection?

2. Something that is peculiar to itself.

1. Carelessness of her young: And it is well this is peculiar to herself, for it is a very ill character. Observe, (1.) How she exposeth her eggs. She doth not retire to some private place, and make a nest there, as the sparrows and swallows do, *Psal.* lxxxiv. 3. and there lay her eggs and her young. Most birds, as well as other animals, are strangely guided by natural instinct in providing for the preservation of their young: But the ostrich is a monster in nature, for she drops her eggs any where upon the ground, and takes no care to hatch them. If the sand and the sun will hatch them, well and good, they may for her, for she will not warm them, *ver.* 14. Nay, she takes no care to preserve them; the foot of the traveller may crush them, and the wild beast break them, *ver.* 15. But how then are any young ones brought forth, and whence is it that the species is not perished? We must suppose, either that God by a special providence with the heat of the sun and the sand (so some think) hatched the neglected eggs of the ostrich, as he feeds the neglected young ones of the raven; or that though the ostrich often leaves her eggs thus, yet not always. (2.) The reason why she doth thus expose her eggs: It is, (1.) For want of natural affection, *ver.* 16. *She is hardened against her young ones:* To be hardened against any is an ill thing even in a brute creature, much more in a rational creature that boasts of humanity; especially to be hardened against young ones, that cannot help themselves, and therefore merit compassion, that give no provocation, and therefore merit no hard usage. But it is worst of all for

her to be hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers, whereas really they are part of herself: her labour in laying her eggs is in vain, and all lost, because she has not that fear and tender concern for them that she should have. Those are most likely to lose their labour that are least in fear of losing it. (2.) For want of wisdom, *ver.* 17. *God hath deprived her of wisdom.* This intimates, that the art which other animals have to nourish and preserve their young is God's gift, and where it is not, God denies it, that by the folly of the ostrich, as well as by the wisdom of the ant, we may learn to be wise; for, (1.) As careless as the ostrich is of her eggs, many people are of their own souls, they make no provision for them, no proper nest in which they may be safe, leave them exposed to Satan and his temptations, and it is a certain evidence that they are deprived of wisdom. (2.) So careless are many parents of their children, some of their bodies, not providing for their own house, their own bowels, and therefore worse than infidels, and as bad as the ostrich; but many more are thus careless of their childrens souls, take no care of their education, send them abroad into the world untaught, unarmed, forgetting what corruption there is in the world through lust, which will certainly crush them: Thus their labour in rearing them comes to be in vain; it were better for their country they had never been born. 3. So careless are too many ministers of their people, with whom they should reside, but they leave them in the earth, and forget how busy Satan is to sow tares while men sleep. They overlook those whom they should oversee, and are really hardened against them.

2. Care of herself. She leaves her eggs in danger, but if she herself be in danger, no creature shall ply the oar better to get out of the way of it than the ostrich, *ver.* 18. Then she lifts up her wings on high, (the strength of which then stands her in better stead than their beauty) and with the help of them runs so fast that a horseman on full speed cannot overtake her; *She scorneth the horse and his rider.* Many times those that are least under the law of natural affection, contend most for the law of self-preservation. Let not the rider be proud of the swiftness of his horse, when so fottish and lubberly an animal as the ostrich shall have the heels of him.

19. Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? 20. Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. 21. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. 22. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. 23. The quiver rattlenth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. 24. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. 25. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha: and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

God having displayed his own power in those creatures that are strong and despise men, here shews it in one scarce inferior to any of them in strength, and yet very tame and serviceable to man, and that is the horse; especially, the horse that is prepared against the day of battle, and is serviceable to man at a time when he has more than ordinary occasion for his service. It seems, there was in Job's country, a noble generous breed of horses. Job, it is probable, kept a good stable of them, though they are not mentioned among his possessions: Cattle for use in husbandry, being there valued more than those for state and war, for which alone horses were then reserved for, and they were not then put to such mean services as with us they are commonly put to. Concerning the great horse, that stately beast, it is here observed,

1. That he has a great deal of strength and spirit, *ver.* 10. *Hast thou given the horse strength?* He useth his strength for man, but has it not from him: God gave it him, who is the fountain of all the powers of nature, and yet he himself delighteth not in the strength of the horse, *Psal.* cxlviii. 10. but has told us that a horse is a vain thing for safety, *Psal.* xxxviii. 17. For running, drawing, and carrying, no creature that is ordinarily in the service of man, hath so much strength as the horse hath, nor is of so stout and bold a spirit, not to be made afraid as a grasshopper, but daring and forward to face danger: It is mercy to man to have such a servant, which though very strong submits to the management of a child, and rebels not against his owner: but let not the strength of a horse be trusted to. *Hof.* xiv. 5. *Psal.* xx. 7. *Isa.* xxxi. 1-3.

2. That his neck and nostrils look great: his neck is clothed with a great thundering mane, which makes him formidable, and is an ornament to him. The glory of his nostrils when he snorts, flings up his head, and throws foam about him, is terrible. Perhaps there might be at that time, and in that country, a more stately breed of horses than any we have now.

3. That he is very fierce and furious in battle, and chargeth with an undaunted courage, though he pusheth on in imminent danger of his life. (1.) See how frolicsome he is, *ver.* 21. he paweth in the valley, scarce knowing what ground he stands upon: He is proud of his strength, and much more reason to be so that useth his strength in the service of man, and under his direction, than the wild ass that useth it in contempt of man, and in a revolt from him, *ver.* 8. (2.) See how forward he is to engage; he goes on to meet the armed men, animated not by the goodness of the cause, or the prospect of honour, but only by the sound of the trumpet, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting of the soldiers, which are as bellows to the fire of his innate courage, and make him spring forwards with the utmost eagerness, as if he cried, *Ha, ha,* *ver.* 25. How wonderfully are the brute creatures fitted for, and inclined to the services for which they were designed. (3.) See how fearless he is, how he despiseth death and the most threatening dangers, *ver.* 22. *He mocketh at fear,* and makes a jest of it; flash at him with a sword, rattle the quiver, brandish the spear to drive him back, he will not retreat, but press forward, and even inspires courage into his rider. (4.) See how furious he is; he curvets and pranceth, and runs on with so much violence and heat against the enemy, that one would think he even swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage, *ver.* 24. High mettle is the praise of a horse rather than of a man, whom fierceness and rage ill become. This description of the war horse will help to explain that character which is given of presumptuous sinners, *Ser.* viii. 6. *Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.* When a man's heart is fully set in him to do evil, and he is carried on in a wicked way by the violence of inordinate appetites and passions, there is no making him afraid of the wrath of God, and the fatal consequences of sin. Let his own conscience set before him the curse of the law, the death, that is the wages of sin, and all the terrors of the Almighty in battle-array, and he mocks at this fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the flaming sword of the cherubim. Let ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, to proclaim the wrath of God against him, he believeth not that it is the sound of the



to pray for rain we may have it, *Zech. x. 1.* But if we lift up our voice to the cloud, to demand it, they will soon tell us they are not at our beck, and we shall go without it, *Jer. xiv. 22.* The heavens will not hear the earth, unless God hear them, *Hos. ii. 21.* See what poor indigent depending creatures we are, we cannot do without rain, nor can we have it when we will. (2.) He cannot commission one flash of lightning, if he had a mind to make use of it for the terror of his enemies, *ver. 35.* *Canst thou send lightnings that they may go on thine errand, and do the execution thou wilt?* Will they come at thy call, and say unto thee, Here we are? No, the ministers of God's wrath will not be the ministers of ours: Why should they, since the *wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God?* see *Luke ix. 55.*

2. God has the stars of heaven under his command and cognisance, and that we have not. Our meditations are now to rise higher, far above the clouds, to the glorious lights above. He instanteth not in the planets, which move in lower orbs, but in the fixed stars, which are much higher. It is supposed that they have an influence upon this earth, notwithstanding their vast distance, not upon the minds of men, or the events of providence: Mens fate is not determined by their stars, but upon the ordinary course of nature, they are set for signs and seasons, for days and years, *Gen. i. 14.* And if the stars have such a dominion over this earth, as it is called here, *ver. 33.* though they have their place in the heavens, and are but mere matter, much more has he who is their maker, and ours, and who is an eternal mind. Now see how weak we are, (1.) We cannot alter the influences of the stars, *ver. 31.* not theirs that are instrumental to produce the pleasures of the spring, *Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?* the seven stars, that constellation which lies in so small a compass (none in less) and yet sheds very benign influences upon the earth: Nor can we alter theirs that introduce the rigour of the winter: *Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?* that magnificent constellation that makes so great a figure, (none greater) dispense rough and unpleasant influences, which we cannot control or repel. Both summer and winter will have their course; God can change them when he pleaseth, can make the spring cold, and so bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, and the winter warm, and so loose the bands of Orion, but we cannot. (2.) It is not in our power to order the motions of the stars, nor are we entrusted with the conduct of them. God, who calleth the stars by their names, *Psal. cxlvii. 4.* calls them forth in their respective seasons, appoints them the time of their rising and setting; but this is none of our province, we cannot bring forth Mazzaroth, the stars in the southern signs, nor guide Arcturus, those in the northern, *ver. 32.* God can bring forth the stars to battle, as he did when in their courses they fought against Siser, and guide them in the attacks they are ordered to make: but man cannot do so. (3.) We are not only unconcerned in the government of the stars, (the government they are under, and the government they are intrusted with, for they both rule and are ruled) but utterly unacquainted with it, we know not the ordinances of heaven, *ver. 33.* So far are we from being able to change them, that we can give no account of them: They are a secret to us: Shall we then pretend to know God's counsels, and the reasons of them? If it were left to us to set the dominion of the stars upon the earth, we should soon be at a loss. Shall we then teach God how to govern the world?

1. God is the author and giver, the father and fountain of all wisdom and understanding, *ver. 36.* The souls of men are nobler, and more excellent beings than the stars of heaven themselves and shine brighter: The powers and faculties of reason with which man is endued, and the wonderful performances of thought, bring him into some alliance to the blessed angels, and whence comes this light but from the Father of lights? Who but he hath put wisdom into the inward parts of man, and given understanding to the heart? (1.) The rational soul itself and its capacities come from him as the God of nature, for he formeth the spirit of man within him. We did not make our own souls, nor can we describe how they act, or how they are united to our bodies. He only that made them knows them, and knows how to manage them; he fashioneth mens hearts alike in some things and yet unlike in others. (2.) True wisdom, its furniture and improvement come from him as the God of grace, and the founder of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, who have all our wisdom from him? Nay, shall we pretend to be wise above our sphere, and beyond the limits which he that gave us our understanding sets to it? He designed we should with it serve God and do our duty, but never intended we should with it set up for directors of the stars or the lightning.

4. God has the clouds under his cognisance and government, but so have not we, *ver. 37.* Can any man with all his wisdom undertake to number the clouds? or (as it may be read) to declare and describe the nature of them? Though they are near us, in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance: And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that the dust grows into solid mire, and the clouds cleave fast together, *ver. 38.* *Who can stay the bottles of heaven?* Who can stop them, that it may not always rain? The power and goodness of God is herein to be acknowledged, that he gives the earth rain enough, but doth not surfeit it; softens it, but does not drown it; makes it fit for the plough, but not unfit for the seed. As we cannot command a shower of rain, so we cannot command a fair day without God, so necessary, so constant is our dependence upon him.

5. God provides food for the inferior creatures, and it is by his providence, not by any care or pains of ours, that they are fed. The following chapter is wholly taken up with the instances of God's power and goodness about animals, and therefore some transfer the three last verses of this chapter to it, which speak of the provision made.

1. For the lions, *ver. 39, 40.* Thou dost not pretend that the clouds and stars have any dependence upon thee for they are above thee; but on the earth thou thinkest thyself paramount, let us try that then; *Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?* Thou valuest thyself upon thy possessions of cattle which thou wast once owner of, the oxen, and asses, and camels that were fed at thy crib: But wilt thou undertake the maintenance of the lions and the young lion, when they couch in their dens, waiting for a prey? No, thou needst not do it, they can shift for themselves without thee: thou canst not do it, for thou hast not wherewithal to satisfy them: thou darest not do it, shouldst thou come to feed them, they would be upon thee: But I do it. See the all-sufficiency of the divine providence: It has wherewithal to satisfy the desire of every living thing, even the most ravenous. See the bounty of the divine providence, that wherever it has given life will give livelihood, even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable but dangerous to man. And see its sovereignty, that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures: the harmless sheep are torn to pieces to fill the appetite of the young lions, who yet sometimes are made to lack and suffer hunger, to punish them for their cruelty, while those that fear God want no good thing.

2. For the young ravens, *ver. 41.* As ravenous beasts so ravenous birds are fed by the divine providence. Who but God provides for the raven

his food? Man doth not, he takes care only of those creatures that are or may be useful to him: But God has a regard to all the works of his hands, even the meanest and least valuable. The ravens, young ones, are in a special manner necessitous, and God supplies them, *Psal. cxlvii. 9.* God's feeding the fowls, especially these fowls, (*Matth. vi. 26.*) is an encouragement to us to trust him for our daily bread. See here, (1.) What offices the young ravens are often in, they wander for lack of meat: The old ones they say, neglect them, and do not provide for them as other birds do for their young: and indeed those that are ravenous to others, are commonly barbarous to their own, and unnatural. (2.) What they are supposed to do in that distress, they cry, for they are noisy, clamorous creatures, and this is interpreted crying to God: It being the bond of nature, it is looked upon as directed to the God of nature. The putting of so favourable a construction as this upon the cries of the young ravens may encourage us in our prayers, though we can but cry Abba, Father. (3.) What God doth for them. Some way or other he provides for them, so that they grow up and come to maturity. And he that takes this care of the young ravens, certainly will not be wanting to his people or theirs. This being but one instance of many of the divine compassion, may give us occasion to think how much good our God doth every day beyond what we are aware of.

## C H A P. XXXIX.

God proceeds here to shew Job what little reason he had to charge him with unkindness, who was so compassionate to the inferior creatures, and took such a tender care of them: or to boast of himself, and his own good deeds before God, which were nothing to the divine mercies: He shews him also what great reason he had to be humble, who knew so little of the nature of the creatures about him, and had so little influence upon them, and to submit to that God on whom they all depend. He discourseth particularly, (1.) Concerning the wild goats and the hinds, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) Concerning the wild ass, *ver. 5—8.* (3.) Concerning the unicorn, *ver. 8—12.* (4.) Concerning the peacock, *ver. 13.* (5.) Concerning the ostrich, *ver. 13—18.* (6.) Concerning the horse, *ver. 19—25.* (7.) Concerning the hawk and the eagle, *ver. 26—30.*

1. **K**NOWEST thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? 2. Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth? 3. They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows. 4. Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn: they go forth, and return not unto them. 5. Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? 6. Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. 7. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. 8. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. 9. Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? 10. Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? 11. Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? 12. Wilt thou believe him that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?

God here shews Job what little acquaintance he had with the untamed creatures that run wild in the deserts, and lived at large, but were the care of the divine providence. As,

1. The wild goats and the hinds. That which is taken notice of concerning them is, the bringing forth, and bringing up of their young ones. For as every individual is fed, so every species of animals is preserved by the care of the divine providence, and for ought we know, none extinct to this day. Observe here,

1. Concerning the production of their young. (1.) Man is wholly ignorant of the time when they bring forth, *ver. 1, 2.* Shall we pretend to tell what is in the womb of providence, or what a day will bring forth, who know not the time of the pregnancy of a hind or a wild goat? (2.) Though they bring forth their young with a great deal of difficulty and sorrow, and have no assistance from man, yet by the good providence of God they get through it, their young ones are safely produced, and their sorrows cast out and forgotten, *ver. 3.* Some think it is intimated, *Psal. xxix. 9.* that God by thunder helps the hind in calving. Let it be observed for the comfort of women in labour, that God helps even the hinds to bring forth their young, and shall he not much more succour them, and save them in child-bearing, who are his children in covenant with them?

2. Concerning the growth of their young, *ver. 4.* They are in good liking, though they are brought forth in sorrow, after their dams have suckled them a while, they shift for themselves in the corn fields, and are no more burdensome to them; which is an example to children when they are grown up, not to be always hanging upon their parents, and craving from them, but to put forth themselves to get their own livelihood, and to requite their parents.

2. The wild ass. A creature we frequently read of in scripture; some say untameable: Man is said to be born as the wild ass's colt, so hard to be governed. Three things providence has allotted to the wild ass. (1.) An unbounded liberty, *ver. 5.* Who, but God, hath sent out the wild ass free? He hath given a disposition to it, and therefore a dispensation for it. The tame ass is bound to labour, the wild ass has no bonds on him. Note, freedom from service and liberty to range at pleasure is but the privilege of a wild ass: It is a pity any of the children of men should covet it, or value themselves by it. It is better to labour and be good for something, than ramble and be good for nothing. But if among men providence set some at liberty, we must not marvel at the matter, it is so among the brute creatures. (2.) An uninclosed lodging, *ver. 6.* Whose house I have made the wilderness where he has room enough to traverse his ways, and fann'd up the wind at his pleasure, as the wild ass is said to do, *Jer. ii. 24.* as if he were to live upon the air, for it is the barren land that is his dwelling. Observe, The



The tame ass that labours and is serviceable to man, has his master's crib to go to both for shelter and food, and lives in a fruitful land: But the wild ass that will have his liberty must have it in a barren land: He that will not labour, let him not eat. He that will, shall eat the labour of his hands, and have also to give to him that needeth. Jacob the shepherd has good red postage to spare, when Esau a sportsman was ready to perish for hunger. A farther description of the liberty and livelihood of the wild ass we have, *ver. 7, 8.* (1.) He has no owner, nor will he be in subjection; he scorneth the multitude of the city: If they attempt to take him, and in order to that surround him with a multitude, he will soon get clear of them, and the crying of the drivers is nothing to him. He laughs at those that live in the tumult and bustle of cities; (so bishop Patrick) thinking himself happier in the wilderness; and opinion is the rate of things. (2.) Having no owner he has no feeder, nor is any provision made for him, but he must shift for himself: the range of the mountains is his pasture, and a bare pasture it is; there he searcheth after here and there a green thing as he can find it and pick it up; whereas the labouring asses have green things in plenty, without their searching for them. From the untameableness of this and other creatures, we may infer how unfit we are to give law to providence who cannot give law even to a wild ass's colt.

3. The unicorn. *Rhem.* A strong creature, *Numb. xxiii. 22.* a stately proud creature, *Psal. xcii. 10.* He is able to serve, but not willing, and God here challenges Job to force him to it: Job expected every thing should be just as he would have it. Since thou dost pretend (saith God) to bring every thing to thy bow, begin with the unicorn, and try thy skill upon him. Now thine oxen and asses are all gone, try whether he will be willing to serve thee in thy stead. (*ver. 9*) and whether he will take up with the provision thou useth for them: *Will he abide by the crib?* No, (1.) Thou canst not tame him, nor bind him with his band, nor set him to draw the harrow, *ver. 10.* There are creatures that are willing to serve man, and seem to take a pleasure in it, and to have a love for their masters; but there are such as will never be brought to it; and it is the effect of sin; man is revolted from his subjection to his Maker; and is therefore justly punished with the revolt of the inferior creatures from their subjection to him; and yet, as an instance of God's good-will to man, there are some that are still serviceable to him. Though the wild bull (which some think is meant here by the unicorn) will not serve man, nor submit to his band in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not *ferre nature*, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whom his service is intitled. *Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him?* (2.) Thou dar'st not trust him: though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost with thine asses or oxen, whom a little child may lead or drive, leaving to them all the pains. Thou wilt never depend upon the wild bull, as likely to come to thy harvest work, much less to go through it, to bring home thy feed, and gather it into thy barn, *ver. 11, 12.* And because he will not serve about the corn, he wants the many good bits which the tame ox hath, whose mouth was not to be muzzled in treading out the corn: But therefore he will not draw the plough, because he that made him never deliqued him for it. A disposition to labour is as much the gift of God as an ability for it. And it is a great mercy, if where God gives strength for service, he gives a heart; and it is what we should pray for, and reason ourselves into, which the brutes cannot do; for as among beasts, so among men, those may justly be reckoned wild and abandoned to the deserts, that have no mind either to take pains, or to do good.

13. Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? 14. Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust. 15. And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. 16. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear; 17. Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding. 18. What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.

The ostrich is a wonderful animal, a very large bird, but never flies. Some have called it a winged camel. God here gives an account of it, and observeth,

1. Something that it has in common with the peacock, and that is his beautiful feathers. *ver. 13. Gavest thou proud wings unto the peacock?* So some read it; fine feathers make proud birds: The peacock is an emblem of pride, when he struts and shows his fine feathers. Solomon, in all his glory, is not arrayed like him. The ostrich too has goodly feathers, and yet a foolish bird. For wisdom doth not always go along with beauty and gaiety. Other birds do not envy the peacock or the ostrich their gaudy colours, nor complain for want of them; why then should we repine, if we see others wear better clothes than we can afford to wear? God gives his gifts variously, and those gifts are not always the most valuable, that make the finest show. Who would not rather have the voice of the nightingale, than the tail of the peacock; the eye of the eagle, and her soaring wing, and the natural affection of the stork, than the beautiful plumes and feathers of the ostrich that can never rise above the earth, and is without natural affection?

2. Something that is peculiar to itself.

1. Carelessness of her young: And it is well this is peculiar to herself, for it is a very ill character. Observe, (1.) How she exposeth her eggs. She doth not retire to some private place, and make a nest there, as the sparrows and swallows do, *Psal. lxxxiv. 3.* and there lay her eggs and her young. Most birds, as well as other animals, are strangely guided by natural instinct in providing for the preservation of their young: But the ostrich is a monster in nature, for she drops her eggs any where upon the ground, and takes no care to hatch them. If the sand and the sun will hatch them, well and good, they may for her, for she will not warm them, *ver. 14.* Nay, she takes no care to preserve them; the foot of the traveller may crush them, and the wild beast break them, *ver. 15.* But how then are any young ones brought forth, and whence is it that the species is not perished? We must suppose, either that God by a special providence with the heat of the sun and the sand (so some think) hatched the neglected eggs of the ostrich, as he feeds the neglected young ones of the raven; or that though the ostrich often leaves her eggs thus, yet not always. (2.) The reason why she doth thus expose her eggs: It is, (1.) For want of natural affection, *ver. 16. She is hardened against her young ones:* To be hardened against any is an ill: nay even in a brute creature, much more in a rational creature that boasts of humanity; especially to be hardened against young ones, that cannot help themselves, and therefore merit compassion, that give no provocation, and therefore merit no hard usage. But it is worst of all for

her to be hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers, whereas really they are part of herself: her labour in laying her eggs is in vain, and all lost, because she has not that fear and tender concern for them that she should have. Those are most likely to lose their labour that are least in fear of losing it. (2.) For want of wisdom, *ver. 17. God hath deprived her of wisdom.* This intimates, that the art which other animals have to nourish and preserve their young is God's gift, and where it is not, God denies it, that by the folly of the ostrich, as well as by the wisdom of the ant, we may learn to be wise; for, (1.) As careless as the ostrich is of her eggs, many people are of their own souls, they make no provision for them, no proper nest in which they may be safe, leave them exposed to Satan and his temptations, and it is a certain evidence that they are deprived of wisdom. (2.) So careless are many parents of their children, some of their bodies, not providing for their own house, their own bowels, and therefore worse than infidels, and as bad as the ostrich; but many more are thus careless of their children's souls, take no care of their education, send them abroad into the world untaught, unarmed, forgetting what corruption there is in the world through lust, which will certainly crush them: Thus their labour in rearing them comes to be in vain; it were better for their country they had never been born. 3. So careless are too many ministers of their people, with whom they should reside, but they leave them in the earth, and forget how busy Satan is to sow tares while men sleep. They overlook those whom they should oversee, and are really hardened against them.

2. Care of herself. She leaves her eggs in danger, but if she herself be in danger, no creature shall ply the oar better to get out of the way of it than the ostrich, *ver. 18.* Then she lifts up her wings on high, (the strength of which then stands her in better stead than their beauty) and with the help of them runs so fast that a horseman on full speed cannot overtake her; *She scorneth the horse and his rider.* Many times those that are least under the law of natural affection, contend most for the law of self-preservation. Let not the rider be proud of the swiftness of his horse, when so forthright and lubberly an animal as the ostrich shall have the heels of him.

19. Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? 20. Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. 21. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. 22. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. 23. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. 24. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. 25. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha: and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

God having displayed his own power in those creatures that are strong and despise men, here shews it in one scarce inferior to any of them in strength, and yet very tame and serviceable to man, and that is the horse; especially, the horse that is prepared against the day of battle, and is serviceable to man at a time when he has more than ordinary occasion for his service. It seems, there was in Job's country, a noble generous breed of horses. Job, it is probable, kept a good stable of them, though they are not mentioned among his possessions: Cattle for use in husbandry, being there valued more than those for state and war, for which alone horses were then reserved for, and they were not then put to such mean services as with us they are commonly put to. Concerning the great horse, that stately beast, it is here observed,

1. That he has a great deal of strength and spirit, *ver. 10. Hast thou given the horse strength?* He useth his strength for man, but has it not from him: God gave it him, who is the fountain of all the powers of nature, and yet he himself delighteth not in the strength of the horse, *Psal. cxlviii. 10.* but has told us that a horse is a vain thing for safety, *Psal. xxxiii. 17.* For running, drawing, and carrying, no creature that is ordinarily in the service of man, hath so much strength as the horse hath, nor is so stout and bold a spirit, not to be made afraid as a grasshopper, but daring and forward to face danger: It is merry to man to have such a servant, which though very strong submits to the management of a child, and rebels not against his owner: but let not the strength of a horse be trusted to. *Iof. xiv. 5. Psal. xx. 7. Isa. xxxi. 1-3.*

2. That his neck and nostrils look great: his neck is clothed with a great thundering mane, which makes him formidable, and is an ornament to him. The glory of his nostrils when he snorts, flings up his head, and throws foam about him, is terrible. Perhaps there might be at that time, and in that country, a more stately breed of horses than any we have now.

3. That he is very fierce and furious in battle, and chargeth with an undaunted courage, though he pusheth on in imminent danger of his life. (1.) See how frolicsome he is, *ver. 21. he paweth in the valley,* scarce knowing what ground he stands upon: He is proud of his strength, and much more reason to be so that useth his strength in the service of man, and under his direction, than the wild ass that useth it in contempt of man, and in a revolt from him, *ver. 8.* (2.) See how forward he is to engage; he goes on to meet the armed men, animated not by the goodness of the cause, or the prospect of honour, but only by the sound of the trumpet, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting of the soldiers, which are as bellows to the fire of his innate courage, and make him spring forwards with the utmost eagerness, as if he cried, *Ha, ha,* *ver. 25.* How wonderfully are the brute creatures fitted for, and inclined to the services for which they were designed. (3.) See how fearless he is, how he despiseth death and the most threatening dangers, *ver. 22. He mocketh at fear,* and makes a jest of it; dash at him with a sword, rattle the quiver, brandish the spear to drive him back, he will not retreat, but press forward, and even inspires courage into his rider. (4.) See how furious he is; he curvets and pranceth, and runs on with so much violence and heat against the enemy, that one would think he even swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage, *ver. 24.* High mettle is the praise of a horse rather than of a man, whom fierceness and rage ill become. This description of the war horse will help to explain that character which is given of presumptuous sinners, *Jer. viii. 6. Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.* When a man's heart is fully set in him to do evil, and he is carried on in a wicked way by the violence of inordinate appetites and passions, there is no making him afraid of the wrath of God, and the fatal consequences of sin. Let his own conscience set before him the curse of the law, the death, that is the wages of sin, and all the terrors of the Almighty in battle-array, and he mocks at this fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the flaming sword of the cherubim. Let ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, to proclaim the wrath of God against him, he believeth not that it is the sound of



the trumpet, nor that God and his heralds are in earnest with him; but what will be in the end hereof it is easy to foresee.

26. Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings towards the south? 27. Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? 28. She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. 29. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. 30. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.

The birds of the air are proofs of the wonderful power and providence of God, as well as the beasts of the earth; God here instanceth in two *fatuly ones*.

1. The hawk, a noble bird, of great strength and sagacity, and yet a bird of prey, *ver. 26*. This bird is here taken notice of for her flight, which is swift and strong, and especially for the course she steers *towards the south*, whither she follows the sun in winter, out of the colder countries in the north, especially when she is to cast her plumes, and renew them. This is her wisdom, and it was God that gave her this wisdom, not man. Perhaps the extraordinary wisdom of the hawk's flight after her prey was not used then for mens diversion and recreation, as it has been since. It is pity the reclaimed hawk, that is taught to fly at man's command, and to make him sport, should at any time be abused to the dishonour of God, since it is from God that she receives that wisdom which makes her flight entertaining and serviceable.

The eagle, a royal bird, and yet a bird of prey too, the permission of which, nay, the giving of power to which, may help to reconcile us to the prosperity of oppressors among men. The eagle is here taken notice of, (1.) For the height of her flight; no bird soars so high, has so strong a wing, nor can so well bear the light of the sun; *now doth she mount at thy command? ver. 27*. Is it by any strength she has from thee, or dost thou direct her flight? No, it is by the natural power and instinct God has given her, she will soar out of thy sight, much more out of thy call. (2.) For the strength of her nest, her house is her castle and strong-hold; she makes it on high and on the rock, the crag of the rock, *ver. 28*, which sets her and her young out of the reach of danger. Secure sinners think themselves as safe in their sins, as the eagle in her nest on high, in the *clefts of the rock*, Jer. xlv. 16. *But I will bring thee down from thence*, saith the Lord. The higher ill men sit above the resentments of the earth, the nearer they ought to think themselves to the vengeance of heaven. (3.) For her quicksightedness, *ver. 29*. *Her eyes beheld afar off*, not upwards, but downwards, in quest of her prey. In this she is an emblem of an hypocrite, who while in the professing of religion he seems to rise towards heaven, at the same time his eye and heart are upon the prey on earth, some temporal advantage, some widow's house or other, that he hopes to devour under pretence of devotion. (4.) For the way she has of maintaining herself and her young; she preys upon living animals, which she seizeth and tears to pieces, and then carries to her young ones, who are taught to suck up blood; they do it by instinct, and know no better; but for men that have reason and conscience, to thirst after blood, is what could scarce be believed, if there had not been in every age wretched instances of it. She also preys upon the dead bodies of men; *where the slain are, there is she*. These birds of prey (in another sense than the horse) *ver. 25*. *smell the battle afar off*; therefore when a great slaughter is to be made among the enemies of the church, the fowls are invited to the *supper of the great God*, to eat the *flesh of kings and captains*, Rev. xix. 17, 18. Our Saviour refers to this instinct of the eagle, *Matt. xxiv. 28*. *Wherefore the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together*. Every creature will make towards that which is its proper food; for he that provides them their food, has implanted in them that inclination. These and many such instances of natural power and sagacity in the inferior creatures, which we cannot account for, oblige us to confess our own weakness and ignorance, and to give glory to God as the fountain of all being, power, wisdom, and perfection.

## C H A P. XL.

Many humbling puzzling questions God had put to Job in the foregoing chapter; now in this chapter, (1.) He demands an answer to them, *ver. 1, 2*. (2.) Job submit's in an humble silence, *ver. 3-5*. (3.) God proceeds to reason with him for his conviction of the infinite distance and disproportion between him and God, and that he was by no means an equal match for him. He challengeth him, *ver. 6, 7*. to vie with him, *if he durst*, for justice, *ver. 8*. power, *ver. 9*. majesty, *ver. 10*. and dominion over the proud, *ver. 11-14*. and gives an instance of his power in one particular animal, here called *Behemoth*, *ver. 15-24*.

1. **M**OREOVER, the LORD answered Job, and said, 2. Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it. 3. ¶ Then Job answered the LORD, and said, 4. Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. 5. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer? yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.

Here is, 1. An humbling challenge which God gave to Job. After he had heaped up many hard questions upon him, by his manifest ignorance in the works of nature, to shew him what an incompetent judge he was of the methods and designs of providence, he clenches the nail with one demand more, which stands by itself here as the application of the whole. It should seem God paused awhile, as Elihu had done, to give Job time to say what he had to say, or to think of what God had said; but Job was in such confusion, that he remained silent, and therefore God here put him upon replying, *ver. 1, 2*. This is not said to be spoken out of the whirlwind, as before, and therefore some think God said it in a still small voice, which wrought more upon Job than the whirlwind did, as upon Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 12, 13. *My doctrine shall drop as the rain*, and then it doth wonders. Though Job had not spoken any thing, yet God is said to answer him; for he knows mens thoughts, and can return a suitable answer to their silence. Here,

1. God puts a convincing question to him: *Shall he, that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?* Shall he pretend to dictate to God's wisdom, or prescribe to his will? shall God receive instruction from every peevish

complainer, and change the measures he has taken to please him? It is a question with disdain: *Shall any teach God knowledge?* Job xxi. 20. It is intimated that those who quarrel with God, do, in effect go about to teach him how to mend his work. For if we contend with men like ourselves, as not having done well, we ought to instruct them how to do better; but is it a thing to be suffered that any man should teach his Maker? He that contends with God is justly looked upon as his enemy, and shall he pretend so far as to have prevailed in the contest as to prescribe to him? We are ignorant and short-sighted, but before him all things are naked and open; we are foolish, but his wisdom is infinite; we are depending creatures, but he is the sovereign Creator; and shall we pretend to instruct him? Some read it, *Is it any wisdom to contend with the Almighty?* The answer is easy; no, it is the greatest folly in the world. Is it wisdom to contend with him whom it will certainly be our ruin to oppose, and unspeakably our interest to submit to?

(2.) He demands a speedy reply to it: *He that reproacheth God let him answer this question to his own conscience*, and answer it thus, *Far be it from me to contend with the Almighty or to instruct him*. Let him answer all those questions which I have put if he can: Let him answer for his presumption and insolence, answer it at God's bar to his confusion: Those have high thoughts of themselves, and mean thoughts of God, who reprove any thing he saith or doth.

2. Job's humble submission thereupon. Now Job came to himself, and began to melt into godly sorrow; when his friends reasoned with him, he did not yield, but the voice of the Lord is powerful. *When the spirit of truth is come he shall convince*. They had condemned him for a wicked man, Elihu himself had been very sharp upon him, chap. xxxiv. 7, 8-37. But God had not given him such hard words. We may sometimes have reason to expect better treatment from God, and a more candid construction of what we do, than we meet with from our friends. And this the good man is here overcome by, and yields himself a conquered captive to the grace of God. (1.) He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say in his own justification, *ver. 4*. *Behold I am vile*; not only mean and contemptible, but vile and abominable in my own eyes. He is now sensible that he hath sinned, and therefore calls himself vile: Sin debaseth us, and penitents abase themselves, reprove themselves, are ashamed, yea, even confounded. I have acted undutifully to my father, ungratefully to my benefactor, unwisely for myself, and therefore I am vile. Job now vilifies himself as much as ever he had justified and magnified himself; repentance changes mens opinion of themselves. Job had been too bold in demanding a conference with God, and thought he could make his part good with him; but now he is convinced of his error, and owns himself utterly unable to stand before God, or to produce any thing worth his notice, the veryest dunghill worm that ever crawled upon God's ground. While his friends talked with him, he answered them, for he thought himself as good as they; but when God talketh with him, he had nothing to say; for in comparison with him he sees himself nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and vileness itself, and therefore *what shall I answer thee?* God demanded an answer, *ver. 2*. Here he gives the reason of his silence; it was not because he was sullen, but because he was convinced he had been in the wrong. Those that are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness, dare not justify themselves before God, but are ashamed that ever they entertained such a thought, and in token of their shame laid their hand upon their mouth.

(2.) He promiseth not to offend any more as he had done: for Elihu had told him this was meet to be said unto God. When we have spoken amiss we must repent of it, and not repeat nor stand to it. He enjoins himself silence, *ver. 4*. *I will lay my hand upon my mouth*, will keep that as with a bridle, to suppress all passionate thoughts which may arise in my mind, and keep them from breaking out into intemperate speeches. It is bad, to think amiss, but it is much worse to speak amiss, for that is an allowance of the evil thought, and gives it an imprimatur; it is publishing the seditious libel; and therefore *if thou hast thought evil lay thy hand upon thy mouth*, and let it go no farther, *Prov. xxx. 32*. and that will be an evidence for thee, that that which thou thoughtest thou allowest not. Job had suffered his evil thoughts to vent themselves, *once have I spoken amiss, yea twice, i. e.* divers times, in one discourse and in another; but I have done, I will not answer, I will not stand to what I have said, nor say it again, I will proceed no further. Observe here what true repentance is. (1.) It is to rectify our errors and the false principles we went upon in doing as we did. What we have long, and often, and vigorously maintained once, yea twice, as soon as we are convinced that it is a mistake, we must retract it, nor adhere to it any longer, but take shame to ourselves for holding it so long. (2.) It is to return from every by-path, and to proceed not one step further in it. I will not add, so the word is, I will never indulge my passion so much again, nor give myself such a liberty of speech, will never say as I have said, nor do as I have done. Till it comes to this, we come short of repentance. Further observe, That those who dispute with God, will be silenced at last. Job had been very bold and forward in demanding a conference with God, and talked very big, how plain he would make his case, and how sure he was that he should be justified, *as a prince he would go near unto him*, chap. xxxi. 37. he would come even to his seat, chap. xxiii. 3. but he has soon enough of it, he lets fall his plea, and will not answer; Lord, the wisdom and right is all on thy side, and I have done foolishly and wickedly in questioning it.

6. ¶ Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 7. Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 8. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous? 9. Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? 10. Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, and array thyself with glory and beauty. 11. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him. 12. Look on every one that is proud and bring him low: and tread down the wicked in their place. 13. Hide them in the dust together, and bind their faces in secret. 14. Then will I also confess unto thee, that thy own right hand can save thee.

Job was greatly humbled for what God had already said, but not sufficiently; brought low, but not low enough, and therefore God here proceeds to reason with him, in the same manner and to the same purpose as before, *ver. 6*. Observe, (1.) Those who duly receive what they have heard from God and profit by it, shall hear more from him. (2.) Those that are truly convinced



convinced of sin, and penitent for it, yet have need to be more thoroughly convinced, and to be made more deeply penitent. Those that are under convictions, that have their sins set in order before their eyes, and their hearts broken for them, must learn from this instance not to catch at comfort too soon; it will be everlasting when it comes, and therefore it is necessary we be prepared for it by deep humiliation, that the wound be searched to the bottom, and not skinned over; and that we do not make more haste out of our convictions than good speed. When our hearts begin to melt and relent within us, let those considerations be dwelt upon and pursued, which will help to make a thorough effectual thaw of it.

God begins with a challenge, *ver. 7.* as before, *chap. xxxviii. 3.* *Gird up thy loins now like a man;* if thou hast the courage and confidence thou hast pretended to, shew it now; but thou wilt soon be made to see and own thyself no match for me. This is that which every proud heart must be brought to at last, either by its repentance or by its ruin; and thus low must every mountain and hill be sooner or later brought. We must acknowledge.

1. That we cannot vie with God for justice; that the Lord is righteous and holy in his dealings with us, but we are unrighteous and unholy in our carriage towards him; we have a great deal to blame ourselves for, but nothing to blame him for, *ver. 8.* *Wilt thou disannul my judgment?* Wilt thou take exceptions to what I say and do, and bring a writ of error to reverse the judgment I have given us erroneous and unjust? Many of Job's complaints had too much of a tendency this way; *I cry out of wrong;* saith he, *but I am not heard;* but such language as this is by no means to be suffered. God's judgment cannot, must not, be disannulled, for we are sure it is according to truth, and therefore it is a great piece of impudence and iniquity in us to cull it in question? What, saith God, *wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous?* Must my honour suffer for the support of thy reputation? Must I be charged as dealing unjustly with thee, because thou canst not otherwise clear thyself from the censures thou liest under: Our duty is to condemn ourselves that God may be righteous. David is therefore ready to own the evil he has done in God's sight, that *God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth,* *Psalm li. 4.* See *Neh. ix. 33. Dan. ix. 7.* But those are very proud and very ignorant both of God and themselves, who to clear themselves will condemn God; and the day is coming, when, if the mistake be not rectified in time of repentance, the eternal judgment will be both the confutation of the plea, and the confusion of the prisoner, for the heavens shall declare God's righteousness, and all the world shall become guilty before him.

2. That we cannot vie with God for power; and therefore as it is a great impiety, so it is great impudence to contest with him, and we go as much against our interest, as we do against reason and right, *ver. 9.* *Hast thou an arm like God;* equal to his in length and strength, or *canst thou thunder with a voice like him,* as he did, *chap. xxxvii. 1, 2,* or doth now out of the whirlwind? To convince Job that he was not so able as he thought himself to contest with God, he shews him, (1.) That he could never fight it out with him, nor carry his cause by force of arms. Some times among men controversies have been decided by battle, and the victorious champion is adjudged to have the right on his side; but if it be put upon the issue between God and man, man would certainly go by the worse, for all the force he could raise against the Almighty, would be but like briars and thorns upon a consuming fire, *I Job. xxvii. 4.* Hast thou, a poor weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to his, who upholdeth all things? The power of creatures, even of angels themselves, is derived from God, limited by him, and dependant on him; but the power of God is original, independent, and unlimited: He can do every thing without us, we can do nothing without him, and therefore we have not an arm like God. (2.) That he could never talk it out with him, nor carry his cause by noise and big words, which sometimes among men go a great way towards the gaining of a point: *Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?* No, his voice will soon drown thine, and one of his thunders will over-power and over-rule all thy whispers. Man cannot speak so convincingly, so powerfully, nor with such a commanding conquering force as God can, who speaks and it is done: His creating voice is called his thunder, *Psalm civ. 7.* so is that voice of his, with which he terrifies and discomfits his enemies, *1 Sam. ii. 10.* *Out of heaven shall he thunder upon them.* The wrath of a king may sometimes be like the roaring of a lion, but can never pretend to imitate God's thunder.

3. That we cannot vie with God for beauty and majesty, *ver. 10.* If thou wilt enter into comparison with him, and appear more amiable, put on thy best clothes. *Deck now thyself with majesty and excellency.* Appear in all the martial pomp, in all the royal pomp thou hast, make the best of every thing that will set thee off, array thyself with glory and beauty, such as may awe thy enemies and charm thy friends; but what is it all to the divine majesty and beauty? no more than the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength. God decks himself with such majesty and glory, as is the terror of devils, and all the powers of darkness, and make them tremble; he arrays himself with such glory and beauty as is the wonder of angels, and all the saints in light, and makes them rejoice. David could dwell all his days in God's house, to behold the beauty of the Lord. But in comparison with this, what is all that majesty and excellency with which princes think themselves feared, and all that glory and beauty with which lovers think to make themselves beloved? If Job think in contending with God, to carry the day by looking great and making a figure, he is quite mistaken. *The sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded, when God shines forth.*

4. That we cannot vie with God, for dominion over the proud, *ver. 11. 12, 13, 14.* Here the cause is put upon this short issue; if Job can humble and abase proud tyrants and oppressors as easily and effectually as God can, it shall be acknowledged that he has some colour to compare with God. Observe here,

1. The justice Job is here challenged to do, and that is to bring the proud low, with a look: if Job will pretend to be a rival with God, especially if he pretend to be a judge of his actions, he must be able to do this.

(1.) It is here supposed that God can do it, and will do it himself, else he would not have put this upon Job. By this God proves himself to be God, that he resisted the proud, sat judge upon them, and is able to bring them to ruin. Observe here, (1.) That proud people are wicked people, and pride is at the bottom of a great deal of wickedness that is in this world; both towards God and man. (2.) Proud people will certainly be abused and brought low, for pride goes before destruction: If they bend not they will break; if they humble not themselves by true repentance, God will humble them to their everlasting confusion. *The wicked will be trodden down in their place,* i. e. Wherever they are found, though they pretend to have a place of their own, and to have taken root in it, yet even there they shall be trodden down, and all the wealth, and power, and interest which their place entitles them to, will not be their security. (3.) The wrath of God scattered among the proud, will humble them and break them and bring them down. If he casts abroad the rage of his wrath as he

will do at the great day, and sometimes doth in this life, the stoutest heart cannot hold out against him; who knows the power of his anger? (4.) God can and doth easily abuse proud tyrants; he can look upon them and bring them low, can put them to shame and fear and utter ruin with one angry look, as he can with a gracious look revive the hearts of the contrite ones. (5.) He can and will at last do it effectually, *ver. 13.* not only bring them to the dust, from which they might hope to arise, but hide them in the dust, like the proud Egyptian whom Moses slew and hid in the sand, *Exod. ii. 12. i. e.* They shall not only be brought to death, but brought to the grave, that pit out of which there is no return. They were proud of the figure they made, but they shall be buried in oblivion, and be no more remembered than those that are hid in the dust; out of sight and out of mind. They were linked in leagues and confederacies to do mischief, and are now bound in bundles; they are hid together, not their rest, but their *shame together is in the dust,* *chap. xvii. 10.* Nay, they are treated as malefactors, who, when condemned, had their faces covered, as Human's was, he binds their faces in secret; or as dead men. Lazarus in the grave had his face bound about. So complete will the victory be that God will gain at last over proud sinners, that set themselves in opposition to him. Now by this he proves himself to be God. Doth he thus hate proud men? then he is holy: Will he thus punish them? then he is the just Judge of the world? Can he thus humble them? then he is the Lord Almighty. When he had abased proud Pharaoh, and hid him in the find of the Red-Sea; Jethro from thence inferred, that doubtless *the Lord is greater than all gods, for wherein the proud enemies of his Israel dealt proudly, he was above them,* he was too hard for them, *Exod. xviii. 11.* See *Rev. xix. 1, 2.*

(2.) It is here proposed to Job to do it. He had been passionately quarreling with God and his providence, casting abroad the rage of his wrath towards heaven, as if he thought thereby to bring God himself to his mind; Come, saith God, try thy hand first upon proud men, and thou wilt soon see how little they value the rage of thy wrath, and shall I then regard it, or be moved by it? Job had complained of the prosperity and power of tyrants and oppressors, and was ready to charge God with mal-administration for suffering it: but he ought not to find fault, except he could mend. If God, and he only, has power enough to humble and bring down proud men, no doubt he has wisdom enough to know when and how to do it, and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or to teach him how to govern the world; unless we had an arm like God, we must not think to take his work out of his hands.

2. The justice which is here promised shall be done him, if he can perform such mighty works as these, *ver. 14.* *Then will I also confess unto thee, that thy right hand is sufficient to save thee,* though after all it would be too weak to contend with me. It is the innate pride and ambition of man, that he would be his own saviour, would have his own hands sufficient for him and be independent; but it is presumption to pretend to it: our own hands cannot save us by recommending us to God's grace, much less by rescuing us from his justice, unless we could by our own power humble our enemies, we cannot pretend by our own power to save ourselves; but if we could, God himself would confess it. He never did, nor ever will defraud any man of his just praise, nor deny him the honour he has merited. But since we cannot do this, we must confess unto him, that our own hands cannot save us, and therefore into his hand we must commit ourselves.

15. ¶ Behold now Behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox. 16. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the naval of his belly. 17. He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapt together. 18. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. 19. He is the chief of the ways of God: He that made him, can make his sword approach unto him. 20. Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play. 21. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. 22. The shady trees, cover him with their shadow: the willows of the brook compass him about. 23. Behold, the drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. 24. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.

God for the further proving of his own power, and disproving of Job's pretensions, concludes his discourse with the description of two huge vast mighty animals, far exceeding man in bulk and strength, one he calls behemoth, the other leviathan. In these verses we have the former described. Behold now behemoth, and consider whether thou art able to contend with him who made that beast, and gave him all that power that he hath, and whether it is not thy wisdom rather to submit to him, and make thy peace with him.

Behemoth signifies beasts in general, but must here be meant of some one particular species. Some understand it of the bull; others of an amphibious animal, well known (they say) in Egypt, called the river-horse, (*Hippopotamus*) living among the fish in the river Nile, but coming out to feed upon the earth. But I confess I see no reason to depart from the ancient and most generally received opinion, that it is the elephant that is here described, which is a very strong stately creature, of very large stature above any other, and of wonderful sagacity, and of so great a reputation in the animal kingdom, that among so many four-footed beasts as we have had the natural history of, *chap. xxxviii. and xxxix.* we can scarce suppose this should be omitted.

Observe,

1. The description here given of the behemoth. (1.) His body is very strong and well built. *His strength is in his loins,* *ver. 16.* His bones compared with those of other creatures, are like bars of iron, *ver. 18.* His back-bone so strong, that though his tail be not large, yet he moves it like a cedar, with a commanding force, *ver. 17.* Some understand it of the trunk of the elephant, for the word signifies any extreme part, and in that there is indeed a wonderful strength; so long is the elephant in his back and loins, and the sinews of his thighs, that he will carry a large wooden tower, and a great number of fighting men in it. No animal whatsoever comes near the elephant for strength of body, which is the main thing insisted on in this description.

(2.) He feeds on the products of the earth, and doth not prey upon other animals, *he eateth grass as an ox,* *ver. 15.* *the mountains bring forth food,* *ver. 20.* and the beasts of the field do not tremble before him, nor flee from him as from a lion, but they play about him knowing there is no danger from him. This may give us occasion, (1.) To acknowledge the goodness of God



God in ordering it so, that a creature of such bulk, that requires so much food, should not feed upon flesh, for then multitudes must die to keep him alive, but should be content with the grass of the field, to prevent such destruction of lives as otherwise must have been made. (2.) To commend living upon herbs and fruits without flesh, according to the original appointment of man's food, *Gen. i. 29.* Even the strength of the elephant, as of an horse and an ox, may be supported without flesh, and why not that of a man? Though therefore we use the liberty God has allowed us, yet *he not among riotous eaters of flesh.* *Prov. xxiii. 20.* (3.) To commend a quiet and peaceable life. Who would not rather like the elephant, have his neighbours easy and pleasant about him, than, like the lion, have them all afraid of him?

(3.) He lodgeth under the shady trees, *ver. 21.* which cover him with their shadow, *ver. 22.* where he has a free and open air to breathe in, while the lions that live by prey, when they would repose themselves, are obliged to retire into a close and dark den, to live therein, and to abide in the covert of that, *chap. xxxviii. 40.* They that are a terror to others, cannot but be sometimes a terror to themselves too; but they will be easy that will let others be easy about them, and the reeds and fens, and the willows of the brook, though a very weak and slender fortification, yet are sufficient for the defence and security of those who therefore dread no harm, because they design none.

(4.) That he is a very great and greedy drinker, not of wine, and strong drink, to be greedy of that is peculiar to man, who by his drunkenness makes a beast of himself, but of fair water. (1.) His belly is big and must be filled, and therefore he must have supply accordingly, *ver. 23.* He drinks so much, that one would think he could drink up a river, if you would give him time; and notwithstanding him. Or when he drinks he hasteth not, as those do that drink in fear; he is confident of his own strength and safety, and therefore makes no haste when he drinks, no more haste than good speed. (2.) His eye is bigger than his belly; for when he is very thirsty, having been long kept without water, *he trusteth that he can drink up Jordan in his mouth,* and even takes it with his eyes, *ver. 24.* As a covetous man causeth his eyes to fly upon the wealth of this world, which he is greedy of, so this great beast is said to snatch, or draw up, even a river with his eyes. (3.) His nose has in it strength enough for both, for when he goes greedily to drink with it, he pierceth through snares or nets, which perhaps are laid in the waters to catch fish. He makes nothing of the difficulties that lie in his way, so great is his strength, and so eager his appetite.

2. The use that is to be made of this description. We have taken a view of this mountain of a beast, this over-grown animal, which is here set before us not merely as a show (as sometimes it is in our country), to satisfy our curiosity and to amuse us, but as an argument with us to humble ourselves before the great God; for,

1. He made this vast animal, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made, it is the work of his hands, the contrivance of his wisdom, the product of his power; it is *behemoth* which I made, *ver. 15.* Whatever strength this or any other creature hath, it is derived from God, who therefore must be acknowledged to have all power originally and infinitely in himself, and such an arm as it is not for us to contest with. This beast is here called the chief in its kind of the ways of God, *ver. 19.* An eminent instance of the Creator's power and wisdom. They that will peruse the accounts given by historians of the elephant, will find that his capacities approach nearer to those of reason, than the capacities of any other brute creature whatsoever, and therefore he is fitly called the chief of the ways of God, in the inferior part of the creation, no creature below man being preferable to him.

2. He made him with man, as he made other four-footed beasts, on the same day with man, *Gen. i. 25, 26.* whereas the fish and fowl were made the day before; and to live and move on the same earth, in the same element, and therefore man and beast are said to be jointly preferred by the divine providence, as fellow commoners. *Psal. xxxvi. 6.* it is *behemoth* which I made with thee; I made that beast as well as thee, and he doth not quarrel with me, why then dost thou? Why shouldst thou demand peculiar favours, because I made thee, *chap. x. 9.* when I made the *behemoth* likewise with thee? I made thee as well as that beast, and therefore can as easily manage thee at pleasure as that beast, and will do it whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose. I made him with thee, that thou mayest look upon him and receive instruction: We need not go far for proofs and instances of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion, they are with us, they are near us, they are under our eye wherever we are.

3. He that made him can make his sword to approach unto him, *ver. 19. 2. c.* The same hand that made him, notwithstanding his great bulk and strength can unmake him again at pleasure, and kill an elephant as easily as a worm or a fly, without any difficulty, and without impeachment either of waste or wrong. God that gave to all the creatures their being, may take away the being he gave, for may he not do what he will with his own? And he can do it, he that has power to create with a word, no doubt has power to destroy with a word, and can as easily speak the creature into nothing, as at first he spoke it out of nothing. The *behemoth* perhaps is here intended (as well as the *leviathan* afterwards) to represent those proud tyrants and oppressors whom God has just now challenged Job to abase and bring down: They think themselves as well fortified against the judgments of God, as the elephant with his bones of brass and iron; but he that made the soul of man, knows all the avenues of it, and can make the sword of justice his wrath, to approach to it, and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. He that framed the engine, and put the parts of it together, knows how to take it in pieces. Wo to him therefore that strives with his Maker, for he that made, has therefore power to make him miserable, and will not make him happy, unless he will be ruled by him.

## C H A P. XLI.

The description here given of the *leviathan*, a very large strong formidable fish, or water-animal, is designed yet further to convince Job of his own impotency, and of God's omnipotence, that he might be humbled for his folly in making so bold with him as he had done. (1.) To convince Job of his own weakness, he is here challenged to subdue and tame this *leviathan* if he could, and make himself master of him, *ver. 1-9.* which because he cannot do, he must own himself utterly unable to stand before the great God, *ver. 10.* (2.) To convince Job of God's power and terrible majesty, divers particular instances are here given of the strength and terror of the *leviathan*, which is no more than what God has given him, nor more than he has under his check, *ver. 11, 12.* The face of the *leviathan* is here described to be terrible, *ver. 13, 14.* His scales close, *ver. 15-17.* His breath and neesings sparkling, *ver. 18-21.* His flesh firm, *ver. 22-24.* His strength and spirit when he is attacked insuperable, *ver. 25-30.* His motions turbulent and disturbing to the waters, *ver. 31, 32.* So that upon the whole matter he is a very terrible creature, and man is no match for him, *ver. 33, 34.*

1. CANST thou draw out *leviathan* with an hook? Or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? 2. Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? 3. Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee? 4. Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant forever? 5. Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? 6. Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants? 7. Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears? 8. Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. 9. Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down, even at the sight of him? 10. None is so fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me?

Whether the *leviathan* be a whale or a crocodile, is a great dispute among the learned, which I will not undertake to determine; some of the particulars agree more easily to the one; others to the other; both are very strong and fierce, and the power of the Creator appears in them. The ingenious Sir Richard Blackmore, though he admits the more received opinion concerning the *behemoth*, that that must be meant of the elephant, yet agrees with the learned Bochart's notion of the *leviathan*, that it is the crocodile which was so well known in the river of Egypt. I confess that which inclines me rather to understand it of the whale, is not only because it is much larger, and a nobler animal, but because in the history of the creation there is such an express notice taken of it, as is not of any other species of animals whatsoever, *Gen. i. 21.* God created great whales; by which it appears not only that whales were well known in those parts in Moses's time, who lived a little after Job; but that the creation of whales was generally looked upon as a most illustrious proof of the eternal power and godhead of the Creator; and we may conjecture that this was the reason (for otherwise it seems unaccountable) why Moses there so particularly mentions the creation of the whales, because God had so lately in this discourse with Job more largely insisted upon the bulk and strength of that creature than of any other, as the proof of his power; and the *leviathan* is here spoken of as an inhabitant of the sea, *ver. 31.* which the crocodile is not; and *Psal. civ. 25, 26.* there in the great and wide sea, is that *leviathan*.

Here in these verses,

1. He shews how unable Job was to master the *leviathan*. (1.) That he could not catch him as a little fish with angling, *ver. 1.* 2. He had no bait wherewith to deceive him, no hook wherewith to catch him, no fish line wherewith to draw him out of the water, nor a thorn to run through his gills, on which to carry him home. (2.) That he could not make him his prisoner, nor force him to cry quarter, nor surrender himself at discretion, *ver. 3, 4.* He knows his own strength too well to make many supplications to thee, and to make a covenant with thee to be thy servant, on condition thou wilt save his life. (3.) That he could not entice him in a cage, and keep him there as a bird for the children to play with, *ver. 5.* There are creatures, so little, so weak, as to be easily restrained thus, and triumphed over, but the *leviathan* is none of those, he is made to be the terror, and not the sport and diversion of mankind. (4.) That he could not have him served up to his table at a fish-dinner; he and his companions could not make a banquet of him; his flesh is too strong to be fit for food, nor if he were good fish is he so easily caught. (5.) That they could not enrich themselves with the spoil of him, shall they part him among the merchants, the bones to one, the oil to another? so they will do if they can catch him; but it is probable the art of fishing for whales was not brought to perfection then, as it has been since. (6.) That they could not be the death of him, could not fill his head with fish-spears, *ver. 7.* He kept out of the reach of their instruments of slaughter, or if they touched him, they could not touch him to the quick. (7.) That it was to no purpose to attempt it, the hope of taking him is in vain, *ver. 9.* If men go about to seize him, so formidable is he, that the very sight of him will give them enough, and make a stout man ready to faint away; shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? and will not that deter the pursuers from their attempt? Job is bid at his peril to lay his hand upon him, *ver. 8.* touch him if thou dare, remember the battle, how unable thou art to encounter such a force, and what is therefore likely to be the issue of the battle, and do no more, but desist from the attempt. It is good to remember the battle before we engage in a war, and put off the harness in time, if we foresee it will be to no purpose to gird it on. Job is hereby admonished not to proceed in his controversy with God, but to make his peace with him, remembering what the battle will certainly end in, if he come to an engagement. See *Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.*

2. From thence he infers how unable he was to contend with the Almighty: *None is so fierce, none so fool-hardy that dare stir up the leviathan,* *ver. 10.* as knowing he will certainly be too hard for them; and who then is able to stand before God? either to impeach and arraign his proceedings, or to outface the power of his wrath. If the inferior creatures that are put under the feet of man, and over whom he has dominion over us; and against whom man has been so long in rebellion? Who can stand before him when once he is angry?

11. Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine. 12. I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. 13. Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? 14. Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about. 15. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. 16. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. 17. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. 18. By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eye-lids of the morning. 19. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. 20. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or cauldron. 21. His breath kindled coals, and a flame



a flame goeth out of his mouth. 22. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. 23. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves, they cannot be moved. 24. His heart is as firm as a stone, yea, as hard as a piece of the nether mill-stone. 25. When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves. 26. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. 27. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. 28. The arrow cannot make him flee: sling-stones are turned with him into stubble. 29. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. 30. Sharp stones are under him; he spreadeth sharp-pointed things upon the mire. 31. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. 32. He maketh a path to shine after him: one would think the deep to be hoary. 33. Upon earth there is not his like: who is made without fear. 34. He beholdeth all high things: he is king over all the children of pride.

God having in the foregoing verses shewed Job how unable he was to deal with the Leviathan, here sets forth his own power in that mighty creature. Here is,

1. God's sovereign dominion and independency laid down, *ver. 11.* (1.) That he is indebted to none of his creatures. If any pretend he is indebted to them, let them make their demand and prove their debt, and they shall receive it in full, and not by composition. *Who has prevented me? i. e. who has laid any obligations upon me by any service they had done me? Who can pretend to be before-hand with me? If any were, I would not long be behind-hand with them, I would soon repay them.* The apostle quotes this for the silencing of all flesh in God's presence, *Rom. xi. 35. Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?* As God doth not inflict upon us the evils we have deserved, so he doth bestow upon us the favours we have not deserved. (2.) That he is the rightful lord and owner of all the creatures: whatsoever is under the whole heavens, animate or inanimate is mine, (and particularly this Leviathan) at my command and dispose; what I have an incontestible property in, and dominion over. All is his, we are his, all we have and do, and therefore we cannot make God our debtor, but of *thine own, Lord, have we given thee?* All is his, and therefore if he was indebted to any, he has wherewith to repay them all; the debt is in good hands. All is his, and therefore he needs not our services, nor can he be benefited by them. *If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof,* *Psalm l. 12.*

2. The proof and illustration of it from the wonderful structure of the Leviathan, *ver. 12.* The parts of his body, the power he exerts, especially when he is set upon, and the comely proportion of the whole of him, is what God will not conceal, and therefore what we must observe, and acknowledge the power of God in. Though he be a creature of monstrous bulk, yet there is in him a comely proportion: In our eye beauty lies in little (*lucet sua gratia parvis*) because we ourselves are little; but in God's eyes even the Leviathan is comely; and if he pronounce even the whale, even the crocodile so, it is not for us to say of any of the works of his hands they are ugly or ill-favoured: it is enough to say so, as we have cause of our own works. God here goes about to give us an anatomy (as it were) of the Leviathan, for his works appear most beautiful and excellent, and his wisdom and power appear most in them when they are taken in pieces and viewed in their several parts and proportions.

1. The Leviathan, even *prima facie*, appears formidable and inaccessible *ver. 13, 14.* Who dares come so near him while he is alive, as to discover or take a distinct view of the face of the garment, the skin with which he is clothed as with a garment? so near him as to bridle him like a horse, and so lead him away? so near him as to be within reach of his jaws, which are like a double bridle? who will venture to look into his mouth, (as we do into a horse's mouth) he that opens the doors of his face will see his teeth terrible round about, strong and sharp, and fitted to devour; it would make a man tremble to think of having a leg or an arm between them.

2. His scales are his beauty and strength, and therefore his pride, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* The crocodile is indeed remarkable for his scales; if we understand it of the whale, we must understand by these shields (for so the word is) the several coats of the skin; or there might be whales in that country with scales. That which is remarkable concerning the scales, is that they stick so close together, by which he is not only kept warm, for no air can pierce him, but kept safe, for no sword can pierce him through those scales. Fishes that live in the water are fortified accordingly by the wisdom of providence, which gives clothes as it gives cold.

3. He scatters terror with his very breath, and looks; if he sneeze or spout by water, it is like light shining, either with the froth or the light of the sun shining through it, *ver. 18.* The eyes of the whale are reported in the night time to shine like a flame, or, as here *like the eye-lids of the morning*; the same they say of the crocodile. The breath of this creature is so hot and fiery from the great natural heat within, that burning lamps and sparks of fire, smoke and flame, are said to go out of his mouth even such as one would think sufficient to set coals on fire, *ver. 19, 20, 21.* Probably these hyperbolical expressions are used concerning the Leviathan to intimate the power and terror of the wrath of God, for that it which all this is designed to convince us of; *fire out of his mouth devours,* *Psalm xviii. 7, 8.* The breath of the Almighty, like a stream of brimstone, kindles Tophet, and will for ever keep it burning, *Isa. xxx. 33.* The wicked one shall be consumed with the breath of his mouth, *2 Thess. ii. 8.*

4. He is of invincible strength and most terrible fierceness, so that he frightens all that come in his way, but is not himself frightened by any. Take a view of his neck, and there remains strength, *ver. 22.* His head and his body are well set together; sorrow rejoiceth or rides in triumph before him, for he makes terrible work wherever he comes. Or those storms which are the sorrow of others, are his joy; what is tossing to others is dancing to him. His flesh is well knit, *ver. 23.* The flakes of it are joined so close together, and are so firm, that it is hard to pierce it; he is as if it were all bone; his flesh is of brass, which Job had complained his was not, *chap. vi. 12.* His heart is as firm as a stone, *ver. 24.* He has spirit equal to his bodily strength, and though he is bulky he is spritely and not

unwieldy; as his flesh and his skin cannot be pierced, so his courage cannot be daunted; but on the contrary he daunts all he meets, and puts them into a consternation, *ver. 25.* When he raised up himself like a moving mountain, the great waters, even the mighty are afraid lest he overturn their ships, or do them some other mischief: by reason of the breaking he makes in the water, which threaten death, they purify themselves, confess their sins, betake themselves to their prayers, and get ready for death. We read, *chap. iii. 8.* of those who, when they raised up a Leviathan, are in such a fright that they curse the day. It was a fear which it seems used to drive some to their curses, and others to their prayers; for as now, so then there were sea-faring men of different characters, and on whom the terrors of the sea have contrary effects; but all agree there is a great fright among them when the Leviathan raiseth up himself.

5. All the instruments of slaughter that are used against him do him no hurt, and therefore are no terror to him, *ver. 26, 27, 28, 29.* The sword and the spear which wound nigh at hand are nothing to him, the darts, arrow, and sling-stones, which wound at a distance, do him no damage, nature has so well armed him cap-a-pee against them all. The defensive weapons which men use when they engage with the Leviathan, as the habergeon, or breast-plate, often stead men no more than their offensive weapons; iron and brass are to him as straw and rotten wood, and he laughs at them. It is the picture of a hard-hearted sinner that despiseth the terrors of the Almighty, and laughs at all the threatenings of his word. The Leviathan so little dreads the weapons that are used against him, that to shew how hardy he is, he chooseth to lie on the sharp stones, *sharp-pointed things*, *ver. 30.* and lies as easy there, as if he lay on soft mire. Those that would endure hardness must inure themselves to it.

6. His very motion in the waters troubles it, and puts it into a ferment, *ver. 31, 32.* When he rolls and tosseth, and makes a bustle in the water, or is in pursuit of his prey, he makes the deep to boil like a pot, he raiseth a great froth and foam upon the water, such as is upon a boiling pot, especially a pot of boiling ointment; and he makes a path to shine after him, which even a ship in the midst of the sea doth not, *Prov. xxx. 19.* One may trace the Leviathan under water by the bubbles on the surface, and yet who can take that advantage against him in pursuing him? Men track hares in the snow and kill them, but he that tracks the Leviathan dares not come near him.

Lastly, Having given this particular account of his parts, his power, and his comely proportion, he concludes with four things in general concerning this animal, *ver. 33, 34.* (1.) That he is a non-such among the inferior creatures; upon earth there is not his like, no creature in this world is comparable to him for strength and terror; or, the earth is here distinguished from the sea: His dominion is not upon the earth, so some, but in the waters; none of all the savage creatures upon earth come near him for bulk and strength, and it is well for man that he is confined to the waters, and there has a watch set upon him (*chap. vii. 12.*) by the divine providence, for if such a terrible creature were allowed to roam and ravage upon this earth, it would be an unsafe and uncomfortable habitation for the children of men, for whom it is intended. (2.) That he is more bold and daring than any other creature whatsoever. He is made without fear: the creatures are as they were made; the Leviathan has courage in its constitution, nothing can frighten him; other creatures, quite the contrary, seem as much designed for flying as this for fighting; among men some are in their natural temper bold, others are timorous. (3.) That he is himself very proud, though lodged in the deep, yet he beholdeth all high things, the rolling waves, the impending rocks, the hovering clouds, and the ships under sail with top and top gallant, this mighty animal beholds with contempt, for he doth not think they either lessen him or threaten him. Those that are great are apt to be scornful. (4.) That he is a King over all the children of pride, i. e. He is the proudest of all proud ones. He has more to be proud of (so Mr. Caryl expounds it) than the proudest people in the world have; and so it is a mortification to the haughtiness and lofty looks of men. Whatever bodily accomplishments men are proud of and puffed up with, the Leviathan excels them, and is a king over them. Some read it as to understand it of God, *He that beholdeth all high things, even he is King over all the children of pride*; he can tame the behemoth, *chap. xl. 19.* and so he can the Leviathan, as big as they are, and as stout hearted as they are. This discourse concerning these two animals was brought in to prove that it is God only who can look upon proud men and abase them, bring them low and tread them down, and hide them in the dust, *chap. xl. 11, 12, 13.* and so it concludes with a *quod erat demonstrandum*; there is one that beholds all high things, and wherein men deal proudly, is above them; he is King over all the children of pride; whether brutal or rational, and can make them all either bend or break before him, *Isa. ii. 11.* The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and thus the Lord alone shall be exalted.

## CHAP. XLII.

Solomon saith, Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof, *Eccles. vii. 8.* It was so here in the story of Job; at evening time it was light. Three things we have met with in this book that I confess have troubled me very much; but we find all the three grievances redressed, thoroughly redressed in this chapter, every thing set to rights and well again. (1.) It has been a great trouble to us to see such a holy man as Job was, so fretful and peevish, and uneasy to himself, and especially to hear him quarrel with God, and speak indecently to him: but though he thus fell he is not utterly cast down, for here he recovers his temper, comes to himself and to his right mind again by repentance, is sorry for what he has said amiss, unsuited it, and humbles himself before God, *ver. 1-6.* (2.) It has been likewise a great trouble to us to see Job and his friends so much at variance, not only differing in their opinions, but giving one another a great many hard words, and passing severe censures one upon another, though they were all very wise and good men; but here we have this grievance redressed likewise, the differences between them happily adjusted, the quarrel taken up, all the peevish reflections they had cast upon one another forgiven and forgotten, and all joining in sacrifices and prayers, mutually accepted of God, *ver. 7-9.* (3.) It has troubled us to see a man of such eminent piety and usefulness as Job was, so grievously afflicted, so pained, so sick, so poor, so reproached, so slighted, and made the very centre of all the calamities of human life; but here we have this grievance redressed too, Job healed of all his ailments, more honoured and beloved than ever, enriched with an estate double to what he had before, surrounded with all the comforts of life, and as great an instance of prosperity as ever he had been of affliction and patience, *ver. 10-17.* And all this is written for our learning, that we, under these and the like discouragements that we meet with, through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope.



1. **T**HEN Job answered the LORD, and said, 2. I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. 3. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. 4. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak? I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 5. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. 6. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

The words of Job justifying himself were ended, chap. xxxi. 40. After that, he said no more to that purpose: the words of Job judging and condemning himself began, chap. xl. 4, 5. here he goes on with words to the same purpose; though his patience had not its perfect work, his repentance for his impatience had. He is here thoroughly humbled for his folly and unadvised speaking, and it was forgiven him. Good men will see and own their faults at last, though it may be some difficulty to bring them to it. Then when God had said all that to him concerning his own greatness and power appearing in the creatures, then Job answered the Lord, (ver. 1.) not by way of contradiction, he had promised not so to answer again, chap. xl. 5. but by way of submission, and thus we must all answer the calls of God.

1. He subscribes to the truth of God's unlimited power, knowledge, and dominion, to prove which was the scope of God's discourse out of the whirlwinds, ver. 2. Corrupt passions and practices arise either from some corrupt principles, or from the inconsideration and disbelief of the principles of truth, and therefore true repentance begins in the acknowledgment of the truth, 2 Tim. ii. 25. Job here owns his judgment convinced of the greatness, and glory, and perfection of God, from which would follow the conviction of his conscience concerning his own folly in speaking irreverently to him. (1.) He owns that God can do every thing. He that made Behemoth and Leviathan, and manageth both as he pleases, what can be too hard for him to do? He knew this before, and had himself discoursed very well upon the subject, but now he knew it with application; God had spoken it once, and then he heard it twice, that power belongs to God; and therefore it is the greatest madness and presumption imaginable to contend with him. Thou canst do every thing, and therefore canst raise me out of this low condition, which I have so often foolishly despaired of as impossible: I now believe thou art able to do this. (2.) That no thought can be withholden from him, i. e. (1.) There is no thought of ours that he can be hindered from the knowledge of. Not a fretful, discontented, unbelieving thought is in our minds at any time, but God is a witness to it: it is in vain to contend with him; for we cannot hide counsels and projects from him, and if he discover them he can defeat them. (2.) There is no thought of his that he can be hindered from the execution of. Whatever the Lord pleased, that did he. Job had said this passionately, complaining of it, chap. xlii. 13. What his soul desireth, even that he doth; now he saith it with pleasure and satisfaction, that God's counsels shall stand. If God's thoughts concerning us be thoughts of good, to give us an unexpected end, he cannot be withheld from accomplishing his gracious purposes, whatever difficulties may seem to lie in the way.

2. He owns himself to be guilty of that which God had charged him with in the beginning of his discourse, ver. 3. Lord, the very first word thou saidst, was, *Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?* and there needed no more; that word convinced me I own; I am the man that have been so foolish. That word reached my conscience, and set my sin in order before me; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused, I have hid counsel without knowledge; I have ignorantly overlooked the counsels and designs of God in afflicting me, and therefore have quarrelled with God, and insisted too much upon my own justification; Therefore I uttered that I understood not, i. e. I have passed a judgment upon the dispensations of providence, though I was utterly a stranger to the reasons of them. Here, (1.) He owns himself ignorant of the divine counsels, and so we are all. God's judgments are a great deep, which we cannot fathom, much less find out the springs of. We see what God doth, but we neither know why he doth it, what he is driving at, nor what he will bring it to; these are things too wonderful for us, out of our sight to discover, out of our reach to alter, and out of our jurisdiction to judge of; they are things which we know not, it is quite above our capacity to pass a verdict upon them; the reason why we quarrel with providence is, because we do not understand it: And we must be content to be in the dark about it, until the mystery of God shall be finished.

(2.) He owns himself imprudent and presumptuous in undertaking to discourse of that which he did not understand, and to arraign that which he could not judge of. He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. We wrong ourselves, as well as the cause which we undertake to determine, while we are no competent judges of it.

(3.) He will not answer, but he will make supplication to his judge, as he said, chap. ix. 15. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak, ver. 4. not speak either as plaintiff or defendant, (chap. xlii. 22.) but as a humble petitioner; not as one that will undertake to teach and prescribe; but as one that desires to learn, and is willing to be prescribed to. Lord, put no more puzzling questions to me, for I am not able to answer thee one of a thousand of those which thou hast put; but give me leave to ask instruction from thee, and do not deny it me, do not upbraid me with my folly and self-sufficiency, James i. 5. Now he is brought to the prayer Elihu taught him, *That which I see not, teach thou me.*

4. He put himself in the posture of a penitent, and therein goes upon a right principle. In true repentance there must be not only conviction of sin, but contrition and godly sorrow for it, sorrowing according to God, 2 Cor. vii. 9. Such was Job's sorrow for his sins.

1. Job had an eye to God in his repentance, thought highly of him, and went upon that as the principle of it, ver. 5. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear many a time from my teachers, when I was young; from my friends now of late: I have known something of thy greatness, and power, and sovereign dominion, and yet was not brought by what I heard, to submit myself to thee as I ought; the notions I had of these things served me only to talk of, and had not a due influence upon my mind; but now thou hast by immediate revelation discovered thyself to me in thy glorious majesty; now mine eyes see thee, now I feel the power of those truths which before I had only the notion of, and therefore now I repent, and unsay what I have foolishly said. Note, (1.) It is a great mercy to have a good education, and to know the things of God by the instruction of his word and ministers: Faith comes by hearing, and then it is most likely to come when we hear attentively, and with the hearing of the ear. (2.) When the understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of grace, our knowledge of divine things as far exceeds what we had before, as that by ocular demonstration exceeds that by report and common fame. By

the teachings of men, God reveals his Son to us: but by the teaching of his Spirit he reveals his Son in us, Gal. i. 16. and so changes into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. (3.) God is pleased sometimes to manifest himself most fully to his people by the rebukes of his word and providence. Now I have been afflicted, now I have been told of my faults, now mine eyes see thee. The rod and reproof give wisdom: Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest.

2. Job had an eye to himself in his repentance, thought hardly of himself, and thereby expressed his sorrow for his sins, ver. 6. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Observe, (1.) It concerns us to be deeply humbled for the sins we are convinced of, and not to rest in a slightly superficial displeasure against ourselves for them. Even good people that have no gross enormities to repent of, yet must be greatly afflicted in soul for the workings and breaking out of pride, passion, peevishness, and discontent, and all their hasty and unadvised speeches; for these we must be pricked to the heart and be in bitterness. Till the enemy be effectually humbled, the peace will be insecure. (2.) Outward expressions of godly sorrow will become penitents, Job repented in dust and ashes. These without an inward change do but mock God; but where they come from sincere contrition of soul, the sinner, by them, gives glory to God, takes shame to himself, and may be instrumental to bring others to repentance. Job's afflictions had brought him to the ashes, chap. ii. 8. he sat down among the ashes; but now his sins brought him thither. True penitents mourn for their sins as heartily as ever they did for any outward afflictions; and are in bitterness, as for an only son or a first-born, for they are brought to see more evil in their sins than in their troubles. (3.) Self-loathing is ever more the companion of true repentance, Ezek. vi. 9. They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed. We must not only be angry at ourselves for the wrong and damage we have by sin done to our own souls, but must abhor ourselves, as having by sin made ourselves odious to the pure and holy God, who cannot endure to look upon iniquity. If sin be truly an abomination to us, sin in ourselves will especially be so; the nearer it is to us, the more loathsome it will be. (4.) The more we see of the glory and majesty of God, the more we see of the vileness and odiousness of sin, and of ourselves, because of sin, and the more we shall abase and abhor ourselves for it. Now mine eye sees what a God he is whom I have offended, the brightness of that majesty that by wilful sin I have spit in the face of, the tenderness of that mercy which I have spurned at the bowels of; now I see what a just and holy God he is, whose wrath I have incurred, wherefore I abhor myself, Woe is me, for I am unclean, Isa. vi. 5. God had challenged Job to look upon proud men and abase them; not I, saith Job, I will never pretend to it, I have enough to do to get my own proud heart humbled, to abase that and bring that low. Let us leave it to God to govern the world, and make it our care in the strength of his grace to govern ourselves and our own hearts well.

7. ¶ And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. 8. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks, and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. 9. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.

Job in his discourses had complained very much of the censures of his friends, and their hard usage of him, and had appealed to God as judge between him and them, and thought it long that judgment was not given upon the appeal; while God was catechising Job out of the whirlwind, one would have thought that he only was in the wrong, and the cause would certainly go against him; but here, to our great surprise, we find it quite otherwise, and the definitive sentence given in Job's favour. Wherefore judge nothing before the time. Those who are truly righteous before God, may have the righteousness clouded and eclipsed by great and uncommon afflictions, by the severe censures of men, by their own frailties and foolish passions, by the sharp reproofs of the word and conscience, and the deep humiliation of their own spirits under the sense of God's terrors; and yet in due time these clouds shall all blow over, and God will bring forth their righteousness as the light; and their judgment as the noon-day, Psal. xxxvii. 6. So he cleared Job's righteousness here, because he, like an honest man, held it fast and would not let it go. We have here,

1. Judgment given against Job's three friends upon the controversy between them and Job. Elihu is not censured here, for he distinguished himself from the rest in the management of the dispute, and acted not as a party, but as a moderator; and moderation will have its praise with God, whether it have with men or no. In the judgment here given Job is magnified, and his three friends mortified. While we were examining the discourses on both sides, we could not discern, and therefore durst not determine who was in the right; something of truth we thought they both had on their side, but could not cleave the hair between them; nor would we for all the world have been to give the decisive sentence upon the case, lest we should have determined wrong: but it is well the judgment is the Lord's, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth, to it we will refer ourselves, and by it we will abide.

Now in the judgment here given,

1. Job is greatly magnified and comes off with honour. He was but one against three, a beggar now against three princes, and yet having God on his side, he needed not fear coming off well, though thousands set themselves against him. Observe here,

(1.) When God appeared for him: After the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, ver. 7. After he had convinced and humbled him, and brought him to repentance for what he had said amiss, then he owned him in what he had said well, comforted him, and put honour upon him: not till then, for we are not ready for God's approbation till we judge and condemn ourselves; but then he thus pleaded his cause, for he that has torn will heal us, he that has smitten will bind us. The Comforter shall convince, John xvi. 8.

See in what method we are to expect divine acceptance, we must first be humbled under divine rebukes. After God by speaking these words had caused grief, he returned and had compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies; for he will not contend for ever, but will debate in measure, and stay his rough wind in the day of his east-wind. Now Job had humbled himself, God exalted him. True penitents shall find favour with God, and



and what they have said and done amiss shall no more be mentioned against them. Then God is well pleased with us when we are brought to abhor ourselves.

(2.) How he appeared for him. It is taken for granted that all his offences are forgiven, for if he be dignified as we find he is here, no doubt he is justified. Job had sometimes spoken with great assurance that God would clear him at last, and he was not made ashamed of the hope.

1. God calls him again and again his servant Job; four times in two verses, and he seems to take a pleasure in calling him so, as before his troubles, chap. i. 8. *Hadst thou considered my servant Job?* Though he be poor and despised, he is my servant for all that, and as dear to me as when he was in his prosperity: though he has his faults, and has appeared to be a man subject to like passions as others; though he has contended with me, has gone about to disannul my judgment, and has darkened counsel by words without knowledge, yet he sees his error, and retracts it, and therefore he is my servant Job still. If we still hold fast the integrity and fidelity of servants to God as Job did, though we may for a time be deprived of the credit and comfort of the relation, we shall be restored to it at last as he was. The devil had undertaken to prove Job an hypocrite, his three friends had condemned him as a wicked man, but God will confess those whom he accepts, and will not suffer them to be run down by the malice of hell or earth. If God saith, *well done good and faithful servant*, the matter is not great who saith otherwise.

2. He owns that he had *spoken of him the thing that was right*, beyond what his antagonists had done: he had given a much better account of the divine providence, and nearer to truth than they had done. They had wronged God by making prosperity a mark of the true church, and affliction a certain indication of God's wrath; but Job had done him right, by maintaining that God's love and hatred is to be judged of by what is in men, nor by what is before them, *Eccles. ix. 1.* Observe, (1.) Those do the most justice to God and his providence, who have an eye to the rewards and punishments of another world more than to those of this, and with the prospect of those solve the difficulties of the present administration. Job had referred things to the future judgment and the future state, more than his friends had done, and therefore he spoke of God that which was right, better than his friends had done. (2.) Though Job had spoken some things amiss, even concerning God, whom he made too bold with, yet he is commended for what he spoke that was right. We must not only not reject that which is true and good, but must not deny it its due praise, though there appear in it a mixture of human frailty and infirmity. (3.) Job was in the right, and his friends in the wrong, and yet he was in pain, and they at ease, which is a plain evidence that we cannot judge of men and their sentiments by looking in their faces or purses; he only can do it infallibly who sees men's hearts.

3. He will pass his word for Job that, notwithstanding all the wrong his friends had done him, he is so good a man, and of such a humble, tender, forgiving spirit, that he will very readily pray for them, and use his interest in heaven on their behalf. My servant Job will pray for you, I know he will. I have pardoned him, and he has the comfort of it, and therefore he will pardon you.

4. He appoints him to be a priest of this congregation, and promiseth to accept him and his mediation for his friends. Take your sacrifices to my servant Job, for him will I accept. Those whom God washes from their sins, he makes to himself kings and priests. True penitents shall not only find favour as petitioners for themselves, but be accepted as intercessors for others also. It was a great honour God hereby put upon Job, in appointing him to offer sacrifice for his friends, as formerly he used to do for his own children, chap. i. 5. And a happy preface it was of his restoration to his prosperity again, and indeed a good step towards it that he was thus restored to the priesthood. Thus he became a type of Christ, through whom alone we and our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God, see 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Go to my servant Job, to my servant Jesus*, (from whom for a time he hid his face) put your sacrifices into his hand, make use of him as your advocate, for him will I accept, but out of him you must expect to be dealt with according to your folly. And as Job prayed and offered sacrifice for those that had grieved and wounded his spirit, so Christ prayed and died for his persecutors, and ever lives making intercession for the transgressors.

2. Job's friends are greatly mortified and come off with a slur. They were good men and did belong to God, and therefore he would not let them lie still in their mistake no more than Job, but having humbled him by a discourse out of the whirlwind, takes another course to humble them. Job, who was dearest to him, was first chidden, but the rest in their turn. When they heard Job talked so, it is probable they flattered themselves with a conceit that they were in the right, and Job in all the fault; but God soon took them to task, and made them know the contrary. In most disputes and controversies there is something amiss on both sides, either in the merits of the cause or in the management of both: and it is fit both sides should be told of it and made to see their errors. God addresseth this to Eliphaz, not only as the senior but as the ringleader in the attack made upon Job.

Now,

1. God tells them plainly, they had not spoken of him the thing that was right, like Job, i. e. they had censured and condemned Job upon a false hypothesis, had represented God fighting against Job as an enemy, when really he was only trying him as a friend; and this was not right. Those do not say well of God, who represent his fatherly chastisements of his own children as judicial punishments, and who cut them off from his favour upon the account of them. Note, It is a dangerous thing to judge uncharitably of the spiritual and eternal state of others, for in so doing we may perhaps condemn those who God has accepted, which is a great provocation to him, it is offending his little ones; and he takes himself to be wronged in all the wrongs that are done to them.

2. He assures them he was angry with them. *My wrath is kindled against thee, and thy two friends.* God is very angry with those who despise and reproach their brethren, who insult over them and judge hardly of them, either for their calamities or for their infirmities. Though they were wise and good men, yet when they spoke amiss, God was angry with them and let them know it.

3. He requires from them a sacrifice to make atonement for what they had said amiss: they must bring each of them seven bullocks, and each of them seven rams, to be offered up to God for a burnt-offering; for it should seem that before the law of Moses all sacrifices, even those of atonement, were wholly burnt, and therefore were so called. They thought they had spoken wonderful well, and that God was beholden to them for pleading his cause, and owed them a good fee for it; but they are told that, quite contrary, he is displeased with them, requires from them a sacrifice, and threatens that otherwise he will deal with them after their folly. Many times God is angry at that in us which we are ourselves proud of, and sees much amiss in that which we think was well done.

4. He orders them to go to Job, and beg of him to offer their sacrifices and pray for them, or otherwise they should not be accepted. By this God designed, (1.) To humble them and lay them low. They thought that they

only were the favourites of heaven, and that Job had no interest there; but God gives them to understand, that he had a better interest there than they had, and stood fairer for God's acceptance than they did. The day may come when those who despise and censure God's people, will court their favour, and be made to know that God has loved them, Rev. iii. 9. The foolish virgins will beg oil of the wise. (2.) To oblige them to make their peace with Job, as the condition of their making their peace with God: *If thy brother has sought against thee (as Job has a great deal against them) first be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift.* Satisfaction must first be made for wrong done, according as the nature of the thing requires, before we can hope to obtain from God the forgiveness of sin. See how thoroughly God espoused the cause of his servant Job, and engaged in it; God will not be reconciled to those that have offended him, till they have first begged his pardon, and he is reconciled to them. Job and his friends had differed in their opinion about many things, and been too keen in their reflections one upon another, but now they were to be made friends; and in order to that they are not to argue the matter over again, and to try to give it a new turn, that might be done endlessly; but they must agree in a sacrifice and a prayer, and that must reconcile them: in affection and devotion they must unite when they could not concur in the same sentiments. Those who differ in judgment about lesser things, yet are one in Christ the great sacrifice, and meet at the same throne of grace, and therefore ought to love and bear with one another. Once more observe, That when God was angry with Job's friends, he did himself put them in a way to make their peace with him. Our quarrels with God always begin on our part, but the reconciliation begins on his.

2. The acquiescence of Job's friends in this judgment given, ver. 9. They were good men, and as soon as they understood what the mind of the Lord was, they did as he commanded them, and that speedily and without gain saying, though it was against the grain to flesh and blood to court him thus whom they had condemned. Note, Those who would be reconciled to God, must carefully use the prescribed means and methods of reconciliation. Peace with God is to be had only in his own way and upon his own terms, and they will never seem hard to those who know how to value the privilege, but they will be glad of it upon any terms, though never so humbling. Job's friends had all joined in accusing Job, and now they join in begging his pardon; those that have sinned together should repent together. They that appeal to God, as both Job and his friends had often done, must resolve to stand by his award, whether pleasing or displeasing to their own mind. And they that conscientiously observed God's commands, need not doubt but to gain his favour; *the Lord also accepted Job*, and his friends in answer to his prayer. It is not said he accepted them, though that is implied, but he accepted Job for them; so he has made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6. Matt. iii. 17. Job did not insult over his friends upon the testimony God had given concerning him, as the submission they were obliged to make to him; but God being graciously reconciled to him, he was easily reconciled to them, and then God accepted him. This is that we should aim at in all our prayers and service, to be accepted of the Lord; this must be the top of our ambition, not to have praise of men, but to please God.

10. And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold. 12. So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. 13. He had also seven sons, and three daughters. 14. And he called the name of the first, Jemima, and the name of the second, Kezia, and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. 15. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. 16. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. 17. So Job died, being old, and full of days.

*Ye have heard of the patience of Job*, (saith the apostle, James v. 11.) and have seen the end of the Lord, i. e. what end the Lord at length put to his troubles. In the beginning of this book we had Job's patience under his troubles for an example; here in the close, for our encouragement to follow that example, we have the happy issue of his troubles, and the prosperous condition to which he was restored after them, which confirms us in counting them happy which endure. And the extraordinary prosperity which Job was crowned with after his afflictions, perhaps was intended to be to us Christians a type and figure of the glory and happiness of heaven, which the afflictions of this present time are working for us, and in which they will issue at last; and what will be more than double to all the delights and satisfactions we now enjoy, as Job's after-prosperity was to his former, though then he was the greatest of all the men of the east. He that rightly endureth temptation when he is tried, shall receive a crown of life, James i. 12. As Job when he was tried, received all the wealth, and honour, and comfort, which we have here an account of.

1. God returned in ways of mercy to him; and his thoughts concerning him were thoughts of good and not of evil, to give the expected (nay the unexpected) end, Jer. xxix. 11. His troubles began in Satan's malice, which God restrained; his restoration began in God's mercy, which Satan could not oppose. Job's sorest complaint, and indeed the sorrowful accent of all his complaints, on which he laid the greatest emphasis, was that God appeared against him; but now God plainly appeared for him, and watched over him to build and to plant, like as he had (at least in his apprehensions) watched over him to pluck up and to throw down, Jer. xxxi. 28. This put a new face upon his affairs immediately, and every thing now looked as pleasing and promising, as before it had looked gloomy and frightful. (1.) God turned his captivity, i. e. he redressed his grievances, and took away all the causes of his complaints: he loosed him from the bond with which Satan had now for a great while bound him, and delivered him out of those cruel hands into which he had delivered him. We may suppose that presently all his bodily pains and distempers were healed, so suddenly and so thoroughly that the cure was next to miraculous: *His flesh became fresher than a child's*, and



and he returned to the days of his youth: and that (which was more) he sensibly felt a very strange alteration in his mind; it was calm and easy, and the toils were all over, his disquieting thoughts were all vanished, his fears silenced, and the consolations of God were now as much the delight of his soul, as his terrors had been his burden. The tide thus turned, and his troubles began to ebb as fast as they had flowed, just then when he was praying for his friends, praying over his sacrifice which he offered for them. Mercy did not return when he was disputing with his friends, no; not though he had right on his side, but when he was praying for them, for God is better served and pleased with our warm devotions, than with our warm disputations. When Job completed his repentance by this instance of *forgiving men their trespasses*, then God completed his remission by *turning his captivity*. Note, We are really doing our business when we are *praying for our friends*, if we pray in a right manner, for in those prayers there is not only faith but love. Christ has taught us to *pray with and for others*, in teaching us to say, *Our Father*; and in seeking mercy for others, we may find mercy for ourselves. Our Lord Jesus has his exaltation and dominion there, where he *ever lives making intercession*. Some by the turning of Job's captivity understand the restitution which the Sabeans and Chaldeans made of the cattle which they had taken from him, God wonderfully inclining them to do it; and with these he began the world again. Probably it was so; those spoilers had *swallowed down his riches*, but they were forced to *vomit them up again*, chap. xx. 15. But I rather understand this more generally of the turn now given. (2.) God doubled his possessions; *alfo the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before*. It is likely he did at first by some way or other intimate to him, that it was his gracious purpose by degrees, in due time to bring him to such a height of prosperity, that he should have twice as much as ever he had, for the encouraging of his hope, and the quickening of his industry, and that it might appear that this wonderful increase was a special token of God's favour. And it might be considered as intended, (1.) To balance his losses: he suffered for the glory of God, and therefore God made it up to him with advantage, and allowed him more than interest upon interest. God will take care that none shall lose by him. (2.) To recompense his patience and his confidence in God, which (notwithstanding the workings of corruptions) he did not cast away, but still held fast, and that is it which has *great recompense of reward*, Heb. x. 35. Job's friends had often put their severe censure of Job upon this issue, *If thou wert pure and upright surely now he would awake for thee*, chap. viii. 6. But he doth not *awake for thee*, therefore *thou art not upright*; well, faith God, though your argument be not concluding, I will even by that demonstrate the integrity of my servant Job, his latter end shall greatly increase, and by that it shall appear, since you will have it so, that it was not for any injustice in his hands that he suffered the loss of all things. Now it appeared Job had reason to bless God for taking away, (as he did, chap. i. 21.) since it made so good a return.

2. His old acquaintance, neighbours and relations were very kind to him, ver. 11. They had been estranged from him, and it was not the least of the grievances of his afflicted state: he bitterly complained of their unkindness, chap. xix. 13, &c. But now they visited him with all possible expressions of affection and respect. (1.) They put honour upon him in coming to dine with him as formerly, (but we may suppose) privately bringing their entertainment along with them, so that he had the reputation of feasting them without the expence. (2.) They sympathized with him, and shewed a tender concern for him, such as becomes brethren. They bemoaned him when they talked over all the calamities of his afflicted state, and comforted him when they took notice of God's gracious returns to him. They wept for his griefs and rejoiced at his joys, and proved not such miserable comforters as his three friends, that at first were so forward and officious to attend him. These were not such great men, nor such learned and eloquent men as those, but they proved much more skilful and kind in comforting Job. God sometimes chooseth the foolish and weak things of the world, as for conviction, so for comfort. (3.) They made a collection among them for the repair of his losses and the setting of him up again: they did not think it enough to say *be warmed, be filled*, but give him such things as would be of use to him, James ii. 16. Every one gave him a *piece of money*, some more it is likely, and some less, according to their ability, and every one an *ear-ring of gold*, (an ornament much used by the children of the east) which would be as good as money to him: this was a superfluity which they could well spare, and the rule is, that our abundance must be a supply to our brethren's necessity. But why did Job's relations now at length shew this kindness to him? (1.) God put it into their hearts to do so, and every creature is that to us that he makes it to be. Job had acknowledged God in their estrangement from him, for which he now rewarded him in turning them to him again. (2.) Perhaps some of them withdrew from him because they thought him an hypocrite, but now his integrity was made manifest, they returned to him, and to communion with him again. When God was friends with him, they were all willing to be friends with him, *Psal. cxix. 74-79*. Others of them, it may be withdrew because he was poor, and sore, and a rueful spectacle, but now he began to get up his back again, they were willing to renew their acquaintance with him. Swallow-friends that are gone in winter, will return in the spring, though their friendship is of little value. (3.) Perhaps the rebuke which God had given to Eliphaz and the other two, for their unkindness to Job, awakened the rest of his friends to return to their duty. Reproofs to others we should thus take as admonitions and instruction to us. (4.) Job prayed for his friends, and then they slocked about him, overcome by his kindness, and every one desiring an interest in his prayers. The more we pray for our friends and relations, the more comfort we may expect in them.

3. His estate strangely increased by the blessing of God upon the little that his friends gave him. He thankfully received their courtesy, and did not think it below him to have his estate repaired by contributions; he did not, on the one hand, urge his friends to raise money for him, he acquits

himself from that, chap. vi. 22. *Did I say, bring unto me or give me a reward of your substance?* and yet what they brought he thankfully accepted, and did not upbraid them with their former unkindness, nor ask them why they did not do this sooner: He was neither so covetous or griping as to ask their charity, nor so proud and ill-natured as to refuse it, when they offered it. And he being in so good a temper, God gave him that which was far better than their money and ear-rings, and that was his *blessing*, ver. 12. The Lord comforted him now according to the days wherein he had afflicted him, and *blessed his latter end more than his beginning*. Observe, (1.) *The blessing of the Lord makes rich*: it is he that gives us power to get wealth, and gives success in honest endeavours. Those therefore that would thrive must have an eye to God's blessing, and never go out of it, no, not into the warm sun; and those that have thriven must not sacrifice to their own net, but own their obligations to God for his blessing. (2.) That blessing can make very rich, and sometimes makes good people so. Those that are become rich by getting, think they can easily make themselves very rich by saving; but as those that have little must depend upon God to make it much, so those that have much must depend upon God to make it more and to double it, *else ye have sown much and bring in little*, Hag. i. 6. (1.) The last days of a good man sometimes prove his best days, his last works his best works, his last comforts his best comforts, for his path, like that of the morning-light, shines more and more to the perfect day. Of a wicked man it is said, *his last state is worse than his first*, Luke xi. 26. but of the upright man, that his *end was peace*, and sometimes the nearer it is, the clearer are the views of it. In respect of outward prosperity, God is pleased sometimes to make the latter end of a good man's life more comfortable than the former part of it has been, and strangely to out-do the expectations of his afflicted people, who thought they should never have lived to see better days, that we may not despair even in the depths of adversity; we know not what good times we may yet be reserved for in our latter end. *Non sinit, nunc & olim sic erit*, it may be well, though now it is ill. Job in his affliction had wished to be as in months past, as rich as he had been before, and quite despaired of that; but God is often better to us than our own fears, nay, than our own wishes, for Job's possessions were doubled to him; the number of his cattle, his sheep and camels, his oxen and the asses, is just double here to what it was, chap. i. 3. This is a remarkable instance of the extent of the divine providence to things that seem minute, as this, of the exact number of a man's cattle: as also of the harmony of providence, and the reference of one event to another; for *known unto God are all his works, from the beginning to the end*. Job's other possessions, no doubt, were increased in proportion to his cattle, his lands, money, servants, &c. So that if before he was the greatest of all the men of the east, what was he now?

His family was built up again, and he had great comfort in his children, ver. 13, 14, 15. The last of his afflictions that are recorded, chap. i. and the most grievous, was the death of all his children at once: his friends upbraided him with it, chap. viii. 4. but God repaired even that breach in process of time, either by the same wife, or she being dead, by another. (1.) The number of his children was the same as before, *seven sons and three daughters*. Some give this reason why they were not doubled as his cattle were, because his children that were dead were not lost, but gone before to a better world; and therefore if he have but the same number of them, they may be reckoned doubled, for he hath two flocks of children, (as I may say) *Mahanaim*, two hosts, one in heaven, the other on earth, and in both he is rich. (2.) The names of his daughters are here registered, ver. 14. because in the significations of them they seemed designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's great goodness to him in the surprising change of his condition; he called the first *Jemima*, the day, (whence perhaps Diana had her name) because of the shining forth of his prosperity after a dark night of affliction. The next *Kezia*, a spice of a very fragrant smell, because (saith Bishop Patrick) God hath healed his stinking ulcers. The third *Kerenhappuch*, i. e. *plenty restored*, or a horn of paint; because (saith he) God had wiped away the tears which souled his face, chap. xvi. 16. Concerning these daughters we are here told, ver. 15. (1.) That God made them great beauties, *no women so fair as the daughters of Job*. In the Old Testament we often find women praised for their beauty, as Sarah, Rebekah, and many others, but we never find any women in the New Testament, whose beauty is in the least taken notice of, no not the virgin Mary herself, because the beauty of holiness is that which is brought to a much clearer light by the gospel. (2.) That their father (God enabling him to do it) made them great fortunes, pardon the vulgar expression. He gave them inheritance among their brethren, and did not turn them off with small portions, as most did. It is probable they had some extraordinary personal merit, which Job had an eye to in this extraordinary favour he shewed them. Perhaps they excelled their brethren in wisdom and piety, and therefore they might continue in his family, to be a stay and blessing to it, he made them co-heirs with their brethren.

5. His life was long. What age he was of when his troubles came, we are no where told, but here we are told that he lived an hundred and forty years; whence some conjecture that he was seventy when he was in his troubles, and so his age was doubled, as other his possessions.

1. He lived to have much of the comfort of this life, for he saw his posterity to the fourth generation, ver. 16. Though his children were not doubled to him, yet in his children's children, (and those are the crown of old men) they were more than doubled. As God appointed to Adam another seed instead of that which was slain, Gen. iv. 25. so he did to Job with advantage. God has ways to repair the losses and balance the griefs of those who are written childless, as Job was when he had buried all his children.

2. He lived till he had enough of it, for he died full of days, satisfied with living in this world, and willing to leave it: not peevishly, as in the days of his affliction, but piously so, and thus as Eliphaz had encouraged him to hope, he *came to his grave like a shock of corn in his season*.



# AN E X P O S I T I O N, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Of the BOOK of P S A L M S.

We have now before us one of all the choicest and most excellent parts of all the Old Testament; nay, so much is there in it of CHRIST and his gospel, as well as of GOD and his law, that it has been called the abstract or summary of both Testaments. The history of Israel which we were long upon, led us to camps and council-boards, and there entertained and instructed us in the knowledge of GOD. The book of Job brought us into the schools, and treated us with profitable disputations concerning GOD and his providence: but this book brings us into the sanctuary, draws us off from converse with men, with the politicians, philosophers or disputers of this world, and directs us into communion with GOD, by solacing and reposing our souls in him, lifting up and letting out our hearts towards him. Thus may we be in the mount with GOD; and we understand not ourselves, if we say not, *It is good to be here.*

Let us consider, (1.) The title of this book. It is called, (1.) *The Psalms*; under that Title it is referred to *Luke xxiv. 44.* The Hebrew calls it *Tehillim*, which properly signifies *psalms of praise*; because many of them are such; but *Psalms* is a more general word, meaning all metrical composures fitted to be sung, which may as well be historical, doctrinal or supplicatory, as laudatory: Though singing be properly the voice of joy, yet the intention of songs is of much greater latitude to assist the memory, and both to express and to excite all the other affections, as well as this of joy: The priests had a mournful muse as well as joyful ones; and the divine institution of singing psalms is thus largely intended; for we are directed not only to praise GOD, but to teach and admonish ourselves and one another in *psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs*, Col. iii. 16. (2.) It is called the *book of Psalms*; so it is quoted by St. Peter, *Acts i. 20.* It is a collection of psalms, of all the psalms that were divinely inspired, which though composed at several times, and upon several occasions, are here put together without any reference to or dependence upon one another; thus they were preserved from being scattered and lost, and laid in so much greater readiness for the service of the church. See what a good master we serve, and what pleasantness there is in wisdom's ways, when we are not only commanded to sing at our work, and have cause enough given us to do so, but have words also put in our mouths, and songs prepared to our hands.

(2.) The author of this book. It is no doubt derived originally from the blessed Spirit. They are spiritual songs, words which the Holy Ghost teacheth: the penman of most of them was David the son of Jesse, who is therefore called the *sweet psalmist of Israel*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. Some that have not his name in their titles, yet are expressly ascribed to him elsewhere, as the second psalm, *Acts iv. 25.* and *Psal. xcvi.* and cv. 1 *Chron. xvi.* One psalm is expressly said to be the prayer of Moses, *Psal. xc.* and that some of the psalms were penned by Asaph, is intimated 2 *Chron. xxix. 30.* where they are said to praise the Lord in the words of David and Asaph, who is there called a seer or prophet. Some of the psalms seem to have been penned long after, as *Psal. cxxxvii.* at the time of the captivity in Babylon, but for certain the far greater part of them were penned by David himself, whose genius lay towards poetry and music, and who was raised up, qualified and spirited for the establishing of the ordinance of singing psalms in the church of GOD, as Moses and Aaron were in their day for the settling of the ordinances of sacrifice; theirs is superseded, but his remains, and will be to the end of time, when it shall be swallowed up in the songs of eternity. Herein David was a type of CHRIST, who descended from him, not from Moses, because he came to take away sacrifice, (the family of Moses was soon lost and extinct) but to establish and perpetuate joy and praise; for of the family of David in CHRIST there shall be no end.

(3.) The scope of it. It is manifestly intended, (1.) To assist the exercises of natural religion, and to kindle in the souls of men those devout affections which we owe to GOD as our creator, owner, ruler, and benefactor. The book of Job helps to prove our first principles of the divine perfections and providence; but this helps to improve them in prayers and praises, and professions of desire towards him, dependence on him, and an entire devotedness and resignation to him. Other parts of scripture shew that GOD is infinitely above man, and his sovereign LORD; but this shews us, that notwithstanding that, he may be conversed with by us sinful worms of the earth; and there are ways in which, if it be not our own fault, we may keep up communion with him in all the various conditions of human life.

(2.) To advance the excellencies of revealed religion, and in the most pleasing powerful manner to recommend it to the world. There is indeed little or nothing in all the book of *Psalms* of the ceremonial law: Though sacrifice and offering were yet to continue many ages, yet they are here represented as things which GOD did not desire, *Psal. xl. 6.—li. 16.* as things comparatively little, and which in time were to vanish away. But the word and law of God, those parts of it which are moral, and of perpetual obligation, are here all along magnified and made honourable, no where more: And Christ, the crown and centre of revealed religion, the foundation, corner and top-stone of that blessed building, is here clearly spoken of in type and prophecy; both his sufferings and the glory that should follow, and the kingdom he should set up in the world, which GOD's covenant with David, concerning his kingdom, was to have its accomplishment in. What a high value doth this book put upon the Word of GOD, his statutes and judgments, his covenant, and the great and precious promises of it, and how doth it recommend them to us as our guide and stay, and our heritage for ever!

(4.) The use of it. All scripture being given by inspiration of God, is profitable to convey divine light into our understandings; but this book is of singular use with that to convey divine life and power, and a holy heat into our affections. There is no one book of scripture that is more helpful to the devotions of the saints than this, and it has been so in all ages of the church, ever since it was written, and the several parts of it delivered to the chief musician, for the service of the church. (1.) It is of use to be sung. Further than David's psalms we may go, but we need not go for hymns and spiritual songs. What the rules of the Hebrew metre were, even the learned are not certain. But these psalms ought to be rendered according to the metre of every language, at least so as they may be sung for the edification of the church: And methinks it is a great comfort to us, when we are singing David's psalms, that we are offering the very same praises to GOD, that were offered him in the days of David, and the other godly kings of Judah. So rich, so well made are these divine poems, that they can never be exhausted, can never be worn thread-bare. (2.) It is of use to be read and opened by the ministers of CHRIST, as containing great and excellent truths, and rules concerning good and evil. Our Lord JESUS expounded the psalms to his disciples. The gospel-psalms, and opened their understandings (for he had the key of David) to understand them, *Luke xxiv. 44.* (3.) It is of use to be read and meditated upon by all good people: It is a full fountain, out of which we may all be drawing water with joy. The Psalmist's experiences are of great use for our direction, caution and encouragement: in telling us, as he often doth, what passeth between GOD and his soul, he lets us know what we may expect from GOD, and what he will expect and require, and graciously accept from us. David was a man after GOD's own heart, and therefore those who find themselves in some measure according to his heart, have reason to hope that they are renewed by the grace of GOD after the image of GOD, and may have much comfort of the testimony of their consciences for them, that they can heartily say Amen to David's prayers and praises. (2.) Even the Psalmist's expressions too are of great use; and by them the spirit helps our praying infirmities, because we know not what to pray for as we ought. In all our approaches to GOD, as well as in our first returns to GOD, we are directed to *take with us words*, Hos. xiv. 2. these words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. If we make David's psalms familiar to us, as we ought to do, whatever errand we have at the throne of grace, by way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, we may from thence be assisted in the delivery of it; whatever devout affection is working in us, holy desire of hope, sorrow or joy, we may there find apt words wherewith to clothe them; sound speech which cannot be condemned. It will be good to collect the most proper and lively expressions of devotions which we find here, and to methodize them and reduce them to the several heads of prayer, that they may be the more ready to us. Or we may take sometimes one choice psalm, and sometimes another, and pray it over, that is, enlarge upon each verse in our own thoughts, and offer up our meditations to GOD, as they arise from the expressions we find there. The learned Dr. Hammond, in his preface to his paraphrase on the *Psalms*, sect. 29. saith, "That going over a few psalms with these 'interpunctions of mental devotion, suggested, animated, and maintained by the native life and vigour which is in the psalms, is much to be preferred before the saying over of the old psalter; since nothing is more fit to be averted in religious offices, than their 'degenerating into heartless dispirited recitations.'" If, as St. Austin adviseth, we form our spirit by the affection of the psalm, we may then be sure of acceptance with GOD in using the language of it. Nor is it only our devotion, and the affections of our mind that the book of Psalms assist, teaching us how to offer praise so as to glorify GOD, but it is also a directory to the actions of our lives, and teaches us how to *order our conversation aright, so as that in the end we may see the salvation of GOD*, *Psal. l. 23.* The Psalms were thus serviceable to the Old Testament church, but to us christians they may be of more use than they could be to them who lived before the coming of CHRIST; for as Moses's sacrifices, so David's songs are expounded and made more intelligible by the gospel of CHRIST, which lets us within the veil; so that if to David's prayers and praises we add St. Paul's prayers in his epistles, and the new songs in the Revelation, we shall be thoroughly furnished for this good work, for the scripture perfected makes the man of GOD perfect.



As to the division of this book, we need not be solicitous; there is no connection (or very seldom) between one psalm and another, nor any reason discernible for the placing of them in the order wherein we here find them; but it seems to be ancient, for that which is now the second psalm, was so in the apostles time, *Acts* xiii. 23. The vulgar Latin joins the ix. and x. together; all popish authors quote by that, so that from thence forward throughout the book, their number is one short of ours, our xi. is their x. our exix. their cxviii. But then they divide the cxlvii. into two, and so make up the number of cl. Some have endeavoured to reduce the psalms to proper heads; according to the matter of them, but there is many times such a variety of matter in one and the same psalm, that it cannot be done with any certainty; but the seven penitential psalms have been in a particular manner singled out by the devotions of many. They are reckoned to be the vi. xxxii. xxxviii. li. cii. cxxx. and cxliii. The psalms have anciently been divided into five books, each concluding with *Amen, Amen, or Hallelujah*, the first ending with *Psalm* xli. the second with *Psalm* lxxii. the third with *Psalm* lxxxix. the fourth with *Psalm* cvi. the fifth with *Psalm* cl. Others divide them into three fifties; others into sixty parts, two for every day of the month, one for the morning, the other for the evening. Let good christians divide them for themselves, so as may best increase their acquaintance with them, that they may have them at hand upon all occasions, and may sing them in the spirit and with the understanding.

P S A L M I.

*This is a psalm of instruction concerning good and evil, setting before us life and death, the blessing and the curse, that we may take the right way which leads to happiness, and avoid that which will certainly end in our misery and ruin. The different character and condition of godly people and wicked people, those that serve God and those that serve him not, is here plainly stated in a few words; so that every man if he will be faithful to himself, may here see his own face, and then read his own doom. That division of the children of men into saints and sinners, righteous and unrighteous, the children of God and the children of the wicked one; as it is ancient, ever since the struggle began between sin and grace, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; so it is lasting, and will survive all other divisions and subdivisions of men into high and low, rich and poor, bond and free; for by this mens everlasting state will be determined, and the distinction will last as long as heaven and hell. This psalm shews us, (1.) The holiness and happiness of a godly man, ver. 1—3. (2.) The sinfulness and misery of a wicked man, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The ground and reason of both, ver. 6. Whoever collected the psalms of David, (probably it was Ezra) with good reason put this psalm first, as a preface to the rest, because it is absolutely necessary to the acceptance of our devotions that we be righteous before God; for it is only the prayer of the upright that is his delight, and therefore that we be right in our notions of blessedness, and in our choice of the way that leads to it. Those are not fit to put up good prayers that do not walk in good ways.*

1. **B**lessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The Psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, that those may first take the comfort of that to whom it belongs. Here is,

1. A description given of the godly man's spirit and way, by which we are to try ourselves. The Lord knows them that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer the character, which is indeed both the command of the law, that we are bound in duty to obey, and the condition of the promise, that we are bound in interest to fulfil. The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooseth to walk by, and to take his measures from. It is of great consequence to us what we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world, or the word of God. An error in the choice of our standard and leader, is original and fatal; but if we be right here, we are in a fair way to do well.

1. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the conduct of evil-doers, and will not be led by them, ver. 1. *He walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, &c.* This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the commandments of their God, must say to evil-doers, *Depart from us*, *Psalm* cxix. 115. And departing from evil, is that in which wildom begins. (1.) He sees evil-doers round about him, the world is full of them, they walk on every side; they are here described by three characters, *ungodly, sinners, and scornful*. See by what steps men arrive to the height of impiety; *Nemo repente sit turpissimus*. They are ungodly first, casting off the fear of God, and living in the neglect of their duty to him: But they rest not there; when the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be sinners, i. e. they break out into open rebellion against God, and engage in the service of sin and Satan; omissions make way for commissions; and by these the heart is so hardened, that at length they come to be scornful, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down hill, and bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others, and advocates for Baal. The word which we translate *ungodly*, signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end, and walk by no certain rule; but are at the command of every lust, and at the beck of every temptation: The word for *sinners*, such as are determined for the practice of sin, and set it up as their trade: and then the *scornful*, are those that set their mouths against the heavens. These the good man sees with a sad heart, they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul. But, (2.) He shuns them wherever he sees them. He doth not do as they do; and that he may not, he doth not converse familiarly with them. (1.) He doth not walk in the counsel of the ungodly; he is not present at their counsels, nor doth he advise with them; though they are never so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly they shall not be the men of his counsel, he doth not consent to them, nor say as they say, (Luke xxiii. 51.) doth not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they use to give and take. The ungodly are forward to give their advice against religion, and it is managed so artfully, that we have reason to bless ourselves from it, and to think ourselves happy if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it. (2.) He stands not in the way of sinners, i. e. He avoids doing as they do; their way shall not be his way, he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it, as the sinner doth, who sets himself in a way that is not good, *Psalm* xxxvi. 4. He avoids (as much as may be) being where they are; that he may not imitate them, he will not associate with them, nor choose them for his companions. He doth not stand in their way to be picked up by them, (*Prov.* vii. 8.) but keeps us far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, *Prov.* iv. 14, 15. He that would be kept from harm, must keep out of harm's way. (3.) He sits not in the seat of the scornful; he doth not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their wickedness, and please themselves with their securedness of their own consciences;

he doth not associate with those that sit in close cabal, to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the devil's kingdom; or that sit in open judgment, magistrally to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards, is the seat of the scornful, *Psalm* cxix. 12. Happy is the man that never sits in it, *Hos.* vii. 5.

2. A godly man, that he may do that which is good and cleave to it, submits to the conduct of the word of God, and makes that familiar to him, ver. 2. This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly, and fortifies him against their temptations; *By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the path of the deceiver*, *Psalm* xvii. 4. We need not court the fellowship of sinners either for pleasure or improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God, and with God himself in and by his word; *When thou wakest, it shall talk with thee*, *Prov.* vi. 22. We may judge of our spiritual state by this, what is the law of God to us? what account do we make of it? what place has it in us? See here, (1.) The entire affection which a good man has for the law of God. His delight is in it. He delights in it, though it be a law, a yoke, because it is the law of God, which is holy, just and good, which he freely consents to, and so delights in it after the inner man, *Rom.* vii. 16—22. All that are well-pleased there is a God, cannot but be well-pleased there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him. (2.) The intimate acquaintance which a good man keeps up with the word of God, *In that law doth he meditate day and night*; and by this it appears his delight is in it, for what we love, we love to think of, *Psalm* cxix. 97. To meditate in God's word, is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things, and experience the favour and power of them in our hearts. This we must do day and night, i. e. we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God, as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts accordingly upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time amiss for the meditating on the word of God, nor any time unreasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and the night; but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day, and with the repose and slumbers of every night; *When I awake I am still with thee*.

2. An assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves to answer the character of such.

1. In general he is blessed, ver. 1. God blesteth him, and that blessing will make him happy. Blessednesses are to him. Blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make him completely happy; none of the ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When he undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for after all, those only are happy, truly happy, that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness, than to know wherein the blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness is not only the way to happiness, (*Rev.* xxii. 14.) but happiness itself; supposing there were not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man that keeps in the way of his duty.

2. His blessedness is here illustrated by a similitude, ver. 3. *He shall be like a tree*, fruitful and flourishing: this is the effect, (1.) Of his pious practice; he meditates in the law of God, turns that in *succum & sanguinem*, and that makes him like a tree. The more we converse with the word of God, the better furnished we are for every good word and work. Or (2.) Of the promised blessing; he is blessed of the Lord, and therefore *he shall be like a tree*. The divine blessing produceth real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man, (1.) That he is planted by the grace of God: these trees were by nature wild olives, and will continue so till they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself, it is the planting of the Lord, and therefore he must in it be glorified, *Isa.* lxi. 3. *The trees of the Lord are full of sap*. (2.) That he is placed by the means of grace; here called *the rivers of water*, those rivers which make glad the city of our God, *Psalm* xlv. 4. from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour, but in secret undiscerned ways. (3.) That his practices shall be fruit abounding to a good account, *Phil.* iv. 17. To those whom God first blessed, he said, *Be fruitful*, *Gen.* i. 22. And still the comfort and honour and fruitfulness is a recompence for the labour of it. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace, that both in the temper of their minds and in the tenor of their lives they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth fruit. And he it observed to the praise of the great dresser of the vineyard, they bring forth their fruit (that which is required of them) in due season, when it is most beautiful and most useful; improving every opportunity of doing good, and doing it in its proper time. (4.) That his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay, *His leaf also shall not wither*. Those who bring forth only the leaves of profession without any good fruit, even their leaf will wither, and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green both to our comfort and to our credit; the laurels he has won shall never wither. (5.) That prosperity shall attend him wherever he goes, soul-prosperity: Whatever he doth in conformity to the law, it shall prosper and succeed to his mind, or above his hope.

In singing these verses, being duly affected with the malignant and dangerous nature of sin, the transcendent excellencies of the divine law, and the power and efficacy of God's grace, from which our fruit is found, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another to watch against sin and all approaches towards it, to converse much with the word of God, and abound in the fruit of righteousness: and in praying over them, we must seek to God for his grace both to fortify us against every evil word and work, and to furnish us for every good word and work.

4. The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6. For the LORD knoweth the

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the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Here is, 1. The description of the ungodly given, *ver. 4.* (1.) In general; they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition. *They are not so.* The LXX. emphatically repeats this, *not so* the ungodly, they are *not so*; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit, but grapes of Sodom, they cumber the ground. (2.) In particular; whereas the righteous are like valuable, useful, fruitful trees, they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away, the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owners of the flour desire to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are light and vain, they have no substance in them, no solidity, they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no steadfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind doth the chaff, which is never gathered or looked after more. The chaff may be for a while among the wheat, but he is coming whose fan is in his hand, and who will thoroughly purge his floor. They that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff, will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath, (*Psal. xxxv. 5.*) so unable to stand before it, or to escape it, *Isa. xvii. 13.*

2. The doom of the ungodly read, *ver. 5.* (1.) They will be cast upon their trial as traitors convicted, *They shall not stand in the judgment*, i. e. They shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be over-ruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though never so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered and appear in its own colours, so every man's future state will be by an irreversible sentence determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment to receive according to the things done in the body; they may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honour, but their hopes will deceive them; *they shall not stand in the judgment*; so plain will the evidence be against them, and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it. (2.) They will be for ever shut out from the society of the blessed; they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, i. e. in the judgment, so some, in that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world, those holy myriads, with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, *Jude 14, 1 Cor. vi. 2.* Or in heaven, there will shortly be a general assembly of the church of the first born, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, *2 Thess. ii. 1.* The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean or un sanctified shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves to their everlasting vexation thrust out, *Luke xiii. 27.* The wicked and profane in this world ridiculed the righteous, and their congregation despised them, and cared not for their company; justly therefore will they be for ever separated from them. Hypocrites in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous, and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when he will separate between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat, *see Matt. xiii. 41, 49.* That great day, so the Chaldee here calls it, will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division: Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here it is sometimes hard to do, *Mat. iii. 18.*

3. The reason rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked, *ver. 6.* (1.) God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed, because the Lord knows their way, he chose them into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps. (2.) Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. Therefore the ungodly perish, because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk, leads directly to destruction, it naturally tends towards ruin, and therefore must necessarily end in it. Or we take it thus, the Lord knows, i. e. he approves of and is well pleased with the way of the righteous, and therefore under the influence of his gracious smiles it shall prosper and end well; but he is angry at the way of the wicked, all they do is offensive to him, and therefore it shall perish, and they in it. It is certain, every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, according as we are or are not accepted of God. Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts, *Jer. xii. 3.* knows their secret devotions, *Matt. vi. 6.* knows their character, how much soever it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honour: Let this cast a damp upon the security and jollity of sinners, that their way though pleasant now, will perish at last.

In singing these verses and praying over them, let us possess ourselves with a holy dread of the wicked man's portion, and deprecate it with a firm and lively expectation of the judgment to come, and stir up ourselves to prepare for it, and with a holy care to approve ourselves to God in every thing, intreating his favour with our whole hearts.

## P S A L M II.

As the foregoing psalm was moral, and shewed us our duty, so this is evangelical, and shews us our Saviour. Under the type of David's kingdom, which was of divine appointment, met with much opposition but prevailed at last, the kingdom of the Messiah the son of David is prophesied of, which is the primary intention and scope of the psalm; and I think there is less in it of the type and more of the anti-type, than in any of the gospel psalms, for there is nothing in it but what is applicable to Christ, but some things that are not at all applicable to David, *ver. 6, 7.* Thou art my Son, *ver. 8.* I will give thee the uttermost parts of the earth, and *ver. 12.* Kiss the Son. It is interpreted of Christ, *Acts iv. 25.*—*xiii. 33,* *Heb. i. 5.* The Holy Ghost here foretells, (1.) The opposition that should be given to the kingdom of the Messiah, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* (2.) The laughing and chaffing of that opposition, *ver. 4, 5.* (3.) The setting up of the kingdom of Christ notwithstanding that opposition, *ver. 6.* (4.) The confirmation and establishment of it, *ver. 7.* (5.) A promise of the enlargement and success of it, *ver. 8, 9.* (6.) A call and exhortation to kings and princes to yield themselves the willing subjects of this kingdom, *ver. 10, 11, 12.* Or thus: We have here, (1.) Threatenings denounced against the adversaries of Christ's kingdom, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) Promises made to Christ himself the head of this kingdom, *ver. 7—9.* Counsel given to all to espouse the interests of this kingdom, *ver. 10—12.* This psalm, as the

former is very fitly prefixed to this book of devotions, because as it is necessary to our acceptance with God that we should be subject to the precepts of his law, so it is likewise that we should be subject to the grace of his gospel, and come to him in the name of a mediator.

1. **W**HY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against his Anointed, saying, 3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. 4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. 5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ, hell and heaven contending it; and the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had an usurped kingdom, and exercised dominion to that degree, that he has been called the prince of the power of the very air we breathe in, and the god of the world we live in. He knows very well that as the Messiah's kingdom riseth and gets ground, his falls and loseth ground; and therefore though it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely. Observe here,

1. The mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion and all the interests of it, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* One would have expected that so great a blessing to this world should have been universally welcomed and embraced, and that every sinner should immediately have bowed to that of the Messiah, and all the crowns and sceptres on earth should have been laid at his feet: but it proves quite contrary. Never were the notions of any sect of philosophers, though never so absurd, nor the powers of any prince or state, though never so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the doctrine and government of Christ. A sign it was from heaven, for the opposition was plainly from hell originally.

1. We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ, and the devil's instruments in this opposition to his kingdom. Princes and people, court and country, have sometimes separate interests, but here they are united against Christ; not the mighty only, but the mob, the least too, the people, numbers of them, communities of them: though usually fond of liberty, yet averse to that liberty Christ came to procure and proclaim. Not the mob only, but the mighty, among whom one might have expected more sense and consideration, appear violent against Christ; though his kingdom is not of this world, nor in any danger of weakening their interests, but very likely, if they please, to strengthen them; yet the kings of the earth and rulers are up in arms presently. See the effects of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, and how general and malignant the corruption of mankind is. See how formidable the enemies of the church are; they are numerous, they are potent. The unbelieving Jews are here called heathen, so wretchedly were they degenerated from the faith and holiness of their ancestors; they stirred up the heathen, the Gentiles, to persecute the Christians. As the Philistines and their lords, Saul and his courtiers, the disaffected party and their ringleaders opposed David's coming to the crown; so Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews did their utmost against Christ and his interest in men, *Acts iv. 27.*

2. Who it is that they quarrel with, and muster up all their forces against. It is against the Lord, and against his anointed, i. e. against all religion in general, and the christian religion in particular; and it is certain all that are enemies to Christ, whatever they pretend, are enemies to God himself, they have hated both me and my Father, *John xv. 24.* The great author of our holy religion is here called the Lord's Anointed, or Messiah, or Christ in allusion to the anointing of David to be king, he is both authorized and qualified to be the church's head and king, is duly invested in the office, and every way fitted for it, and yet there are those that are against him: nay, therefore they are against him, because they are impatient of God's authority, envious at his advancement, and have a rooted enmity to the spirit of holiness.

3. The opposition they give is here described: (1.) It is a most spiteful and malicious opposition. They rage and fret, gnash their teeth for vexation at the setting up of Christ's kingdom; it created them the greatest uneasiness that can be, and fills them with indignation, so that they have no enjoyment of themselves, *see Luke xiii. 14.* *John xi. 47.* *Acts v. 17—33.*—*xix. 28.* Idolaters raged at the discovery of their folly, the chief priests and Pharisees at the eclipsing of their glory and the shaking of their usurped dominion. They that did evil raged at the light. (2.) It is a deliberate politic opposition. They imagine or meditate, i. e. they contrive means to suppress the rising interests of Christ's kingdom, and are very confident of the success of their contrivances; they promise themselves that they shall run down religion and carry the day. (3.) It is a resolute obstinate opposition; they set themselves, set their faces as a flint, and their hearts as an adamant, in defiance of reason and conscience, and all the terrors of the Lord; they are proud and daring, like the Babel builders, and will persist in their resolution come what will. (4.) It is a combined confederate opposition. They take counsel together to assist and animate one another in this opposition: they are unanimous in their resolutions, and carry them, *vermine contradicente*, that they will push on the unholy war against the Messiah with the utmost vigour: and thereupon councils are called, cabals are formed, and all their wits are at work to find out ways and means for the preventing of the establishment of Christ's kingdom, *Psal. lxxxiii. 5.*

4. We are here told what it is they are exasperated at, and what they aim at in this opposition, *ver. 3.* Let us break their bands asunder. They will not be under any government; they are children of Belial that cannot endure the yoke, however not under the government of the Lord and his Anointed; They will be content to entertain the notions of the kingdom of God and the Messiah, which will serve them to dispute of, and to support their own dominion with. If the Lord and his Anointed will make them rich and great in this world, they will bid them welcome: but if they will restrain their corrupt appetites and passions, regulate and reform their hearts and lives, and bring them under the government of a pure and heavenly religion, truly then they will not have this man to reign over them, *Luke xix. 14.* Christ has bands and cords for us, they that will be saved by him, must be ruled by him; but they are cords of a man agreeable to right reason, and bands of love, conducive to our true interest; and yet against those the quarrel is; why do men oppose religion, but because they are impatient of the restraints and obligations of it? They would break asunder the bands of conscience they are under, and the cords of God's commandments by which they are called to tie themselves out from all sin, and to tie themselves up to all duty, they will not receive, but cast them away as far from them as they can.

5. They



5. They are here reasoned with concerning it, *ver. 1.* Why do they do this? (1.) They can shew no good cause for opposing so just, and holy, and gracious a government, which will not interfere with the secular power, nor introduce any dangerous principles hurtful to kings or provinces; but on the contrary, if universally received, will bring a heaven upon earth.

(2.) They can hope for no good success in opposing so powerful a kingdom, with which they are utterly unable to contend. It is a vain thing; when they have done their worst, Christ will have a church in the world, and that church will be glorious and triumphant; it is *built upon the rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The moon walks in brightness, though the dogs bark at it.

2. The mighty conquest gained over all this threatening opposition. If heaven and earth be the combatants, it is easy to foretel which will be the conqueror: they that make this mighty struggle or the people of the earth, and the kings of the earth, who being of the earth are earthly; but he whom the contest is with is one that *sits in the heavens*, *ver. 4.* He is in the heavens, a place of such a vast prospect, that he can oversee them all, and all their projects; and such a vast power, that he can overcome them all, and all their attempts; he sits there as one easy and at rest, out of the reach of all their impotent means and attempts. There he sits as judge in all affairs of the children of men, perfectly secure of the full accomplishment of all his own purposes and designs in spite of all opposition, *Psal. xxix. 10.* The perfect repose of the eternal mind may be our comfort under all the disquietudes of our mind. We are tossed on earth and in the sea, but he sits in the heavens, where he has prepared his throne for judgment; and therefore,

1. The attempts of Christ's enemies are easily ridiculed, God laughs at them for a company of fools. He hath them and all their attempts in derision, and therefore *the virgin, the daughter of Zion, had despised them.* *Isa. xxxvii. 22.* Sinners' follies are the just sport of God's infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan, which in our eyes are formidable, in his are despicable. Sometimes God is said to awake, and arise, and stir up himself for the vanquishing of his enemies, here he is said to sit still and do it; for the utmost operations of God's omnipotence create no difficulty at all, nor the least disturbance to his eternal rest.

2. They are *justly punished*, *ver. 5.* Though God dispiseth them as impotent, yet he doth not therefore wink at them, but is justly displeased with them as impudent and impious, and will make the most daring sinners to know that he is so, and to tremble before him. (1.) Their sin is a provocation to him; he is wroth, he is sorely displeased. We cannot expect that God should be reconciled to us or well pleased in us, but in and through the Anointed; and therefore if we affront and reject him, we sin against the remedy, and forfeit the benefit of his interposal between us and God. (2.) His anger will be a vexation to them; but if he speak to them in his wrath, even the breath of his mouth will be their confusion, slaughter and consumption, *Isa. xi. 6. 2 Thess. ii. 8.* He speaks and it is done, he speaks in wrath and sinners are undone: as a word made us, so a word can unmake us again, *Who knows the power of his anger?* The enemies rage, but cannot vex God. God sits still, and yet vexeth them, puts them into a consternation, (as the word is) and brings them to their wits end: his setting up this kingdom of his Son in spite of them is the greatest vexation to them that can be. They were vexations to Christ's good subjects; but the day is coming when vexations shall be recompensed to them.

3. They are certainly defeated, and all their counsels turned headlong, *ver. 6.* *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.* David was advanced to the throne, and became master of the strong hold of Zion, notwithstanding the disturbance given him by the malecontents in his kingdom, and particularly the affronts he received from the garrison of Zion, who taunted him with their blind and their lame, their maimed soldiers. *2 Sam. v. 6.* And the Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, has all power both in heaven and earth, and is head over all things to the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of his enemies to hinder his advancement. (1.) Jesus Christ is a king, and is invested by him who is the fountain of power, with the dignity and authority of a sovereign prince in the kingdom both of providence and grace. (2.) God is pleased to call him his king, because he is appointed by him, and intrusted for him with the sole administration of government and judgment. He is his king, for he is dear to the father, and one in whom he is well pleased. (3.) Christ took not this honour to himself, but was called to it, and he that called him owns him, *I have set him;* his commandment, his commission he received from the Father. (4.) Being called to this honour, he was confirmed in it, high places (we say) are slippery places, but Christ being raised, is fixed, *I have set him,* I have settled him. (5.) He is set upon Zion, the hill of God's holiness, a type of the gospel-church, for on that the temple was built, for the sake of which the whole mount was called holy. Christ's throne is set up in his church, that is, in the hearts of all believers, and in the societies of them. The evangelical law of Christ is said to go forth from Zion, *Isa. ii. 3. Mic. iv. 2.* and therefore that is spoken of as the head quarters of the general, the royal seat of this prince, in whom the children of men shall be joyful.

We are to sing these verses with an holy exultation, triumphing over all the enemies of Christ's kingdom, not doubting but they will all of them be quickly made his footstool; and triumphing in Jesus Christ as the great trustee of power: and we are to pray in firm belief of the assurance here given, Father in heaven, *thy kingdom come:* let thy son's kingdom come.

7. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 8. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

We have heard what the kings of the earth have to say against Christ's kingdom, and have heard it gain said by him that sits in heaven: let us now hear what the Messiah himself has to say for his kingdom to make good his claim, and it is what all the powers on earth cannot gainsay. (1.) The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon a decree, an eternal decree of God the Father. It was not a sudden resolve, it was not the trial of an experiment, but the result of the counsels of the divine wisdom, and the determinations of the divine will before all worlds, neither of which can be altered. The precept or statute, so some read it; the covenant or compact, so others; the federal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning man's redemption, represented by the covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, *Psal. lxxxix. 3.* This our Lord Jesus often referred himself to, as that which all along in his undertaking he governed himself by. *This is the will of him that sent me,* John vi. 40. *This commandment have I received of my Father,* John x. 18.—xiv. 31.

(2.) There is a declaration of that decree, as far as is necessary for the

satisfaction of all those who are called and commanded to yield themselves subject to this king, and to leave them inexcusable who will not have him to reign over them. The decree was secret, it was what the Father said to the Son, when he possessed him in the beginning of his way, before his works of old: but it is declared by a faithful witness, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and came into the world as the prophet of the church, to declare him, *John i. 18.* The Fountain of all being is without doubt the Fountain of all power; and it is by, from, and under him, that the Messiah claims he has a right to rule, from what Jehovah said to him, by whose word all things were made and are governed. Christ here makes out a two-fold title to his kingdom.

1. A title by inheritance, *ver. 7.* *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* This scripture the apostle quotes, *Heb. i. 5.* to prove not only that Christ has a more excellent nature than the angels, but that he *obtained it by inheritance*, *ver. 4.* He is the son of God, not by adoption, but his begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, *John i. 14.* And the Father owns him, and will have this declared to the world, as the reason why he is constituted king upon the holy hill of Zion: he is therefore unquestionably entitled to and perfectly qualified for that great trust. He is the son of God, and therefore of the same nature with the Father, has in him all the fulness of the Godhead, infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. The supreme government of the church is too high an honour and too hard an undertaking for any mere creature; none can be fit for it but he who is *one with the Father*, and was *from eternity by him, as one brought up with him*, thoroughly apprised of all his counsels, *Prov. viii. 30.* He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to him, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and upon this account we are to receive him as a king; for because *the Father loveth the Son, he hath given all things into his hand*, *John iii. 35*—v. 20. Being a Son, he is heir of all things, and the Father having made the worlds by him, it is easy to infer from thence, that by him also he governs them; for he is the eternal wisdom and the eternal. If God hath said unto him, *Thou art my Son*, it becomes each of us to say to him, *Thou art my Lord, my sovereign.* Further, to satisfy us that his kingdom is well grounded upon his sonship, we are here told what his sonship is grounded on; *this day have I begotten thee*; which refers both to his eternal generation itself, for it is quoted, *Heb. i. 5.* to prove that he is the *brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, *ver. 3.* and to the evidence and demonstration which was given of it by his resurrection from the dead, for to that also it is expressly applied by the apostle, *Acts xiii. 33.* *He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* It was by the resurrection from the dead, that sign of the prophet Jonas, which was to be the most convincing of all, that he was *declared to be the Son of God, with power*, *Rom. i. 4.* Christ is said to be the first-begotten and first-born from the dead, *Rev. i. 5. Col. i. 18.* And immediately after his resurrection it was that he entered upon the administration of his mediatorial kingdom, it was then that he said, *All power is given unto me*, and to that especially he had an eye when he taught his disciples to pray, *Thy kingdom come.*

2. A title by agreement, *ver. 8, 9.* The agreement is in short this; the Son must undertake the office of an intercessor, and upon that condition he shall have the honour and power of an universal monarch, see *Isa. liii. 12.* *Therefore will I divide a portion with the great, because he made intercession for the transgressors: he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both,* *Zech. vi. 13.*

1. The Son must ask. This supposeth his putting himself voluntarily into a state of inferiority to the Father, by taking upon him the human nature; for as God, he was equal in power and glory with the Father, and had nothing to ask. It supposeth the making of a satisfaction, in the virtue of which the intercession must be made, and the paying of a price on which this large demand was to be grounded; see *John xvii. 4, 5.* The Son in asking the heathen for his inheritance, aims not only at his own honour, but at their happiness in him; so that he intercedes for them, ever lives to do so, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

2. The Father will grant more than to the half of the kingdom, even to the kingdom itself. It is here promised, (1.) That his government shall be universal; he shall have the heathen for his inheritance; not the Jews only, to whose nation the church had been long confined, but the Gentiles also, those in the uttermost parts of the earth, (as this nation of ours) shall be his possession, and he shall have multitudes of willing loyal subjects among them. Baptized christians are the possession of the Lord Jesus, they are to him for a name and a praise, God the Father gives them to him, when by his spirit and grace he works upon them to submit their necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. This is in part fulfilled; a great part of the Gentile world received the gospel when it was first preached, and Christ's throne was set up there where Satan's seat had long been: But it is to be yet further accomplished, when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ*, *Rev. xi. 15.* *Who shall live when God doth this?* (2.) That it shall be victorious, *Thou shalt break them, i. e.* those of them that oppose thy kingdom, *with a rod of iron*, *ver. 9.* This was in part fulfilled when the nations of the Jews, those that persisted in unbelief and enmity to Christ's gospel, were destroyed by the Roman power, which was represented, *Dan. ii. 40.* by feet of iron, as here by a rod of iron. It had a further accomplishment in the destruction of the Pagan powers, when the Christian religion came to be established; but it will not be completely fulfilled till all opposing rule, principality and power, shall be finally put down, *1 Cor. xv. 24.* See *Psal. cx. 5, 6.* Observe, How powerful Christ is, and how weak the enemies of his kingdom are before him, he hath a rod of iron wherewith to crush them that will not submit to his golden sceptre; they are but like a potter's vessel before him, suddenly, easily, and irreparably dashed in pieces by him, see *Rev. ii. 27.* Thou shalt do it, *i. e.* thou shalt have leave to do it; nations shall be ruined, rather than the gospel-church shall not be built and established: *I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee*, *Isa. xliii. 4.* Thou shalt have power to do it, and none shall be able to stand before thee, and thou shalt do it effectually. They that will not bow shall break.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must give glory to Christ as the eternal son of God, and our rightful Lord, and must take comfort from this promise, and plead it with God that the kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged and established, and shall triumph over all opposition.

10. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. 11. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. 12. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

We have here the practical application of this gospel doctrine, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, by way of exhortation to the kings and judges of



of the earth. They hear that it is in vain to oppose Christ's government, let them therefore be so wise for themselves as to submit to it. He that has power to destroy them, shews that he has no pleasure in their destruction, for he puts them into a way to make themselves happy, ver. 10. Those that would be wise must be instructed; and those are truly wise that receive instruction from the word of God. Kings and judges stand upon a level with common persons before God; and it is as necessary for them to be religious as for any others. They that give law and judgment to others, must receive it from Christ, and it will be their wisdom. What is said to them is said to all, and is required of every one of us, only it is directed to kings and judges, because of the influence which their example will have upon their inferiors, and because they were men of rank and power that opposed the setting up of Christ's kingdom, ver. 2. We are exhorted,

1. To reverence God, and to stand in awe of him, ver. 11. This is the great duty of natural religion. God is great and infinitely above us, just and holy, and provoked against us, and therefore we ought to fear him and tremble before him, yet he is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve him, our friend and benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him; and these are very well consistent with each other, for, (1.) We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him. Even kings themselves, whom others serve and fear, must serve and fear God, there is the same infinite distance between them and God, that there is between the meanest of their subjects and him. (2.) We must rejoice in God, and in subordination to him, we may rejoice in other things, but still with a holy trembling, as those who know what a glorious and jealous God he is, whose eye is always upon us; our salvation must be wrought out with fear and trembling, Phil. ii. 12. We ought to rejoice in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, but rejoice with trembling, with a holy awe of him, a holy fear for ourselves, lest we come short, and a tender concern for the many precious souls to whom his gospel and kingdom are a favour of death unto death. Whatever we rejoice in in this world, it must always be with trembling, lest we grow vain in our joy, and be puffed up with the things we rejoice in; and because of the uncertainty of them, and the damp which by a thousand accidents may soon be cast upon our joy. To rejoice with trembling, is to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, 1 Cor. vii. 29.

2. To welcome Jesus Christ, and to submit to him, ver. 12. This is the great duty of the Christian religion, it is that which is required of all, even kings and judges, and it is our wisdom and interest to do it. Observe here,

1. The command given to this purpose, *Kiss the Son*. Christ is called the Son, because so he was declared, ver. 7. *Thou art my Son*. He is the Son of God by eternal generation, and upon that account he is to be adored by us: He is the *son of man*, i. e. the mediator, John v. 27. and upon that account to be received and submitted to, he is called the Son to include both, as God is often called emphatically the Father, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father, and we must have an eye to him under both considerations. Our duty to Christ is here expressed figuratively, *Kiss the Son*. Not with a betraying kiss, as Judas kissed him, and as all hypocrites who pretend to honour him, but really affront him: But with a believing kiss. (1.) With a kiss of agreement and reconciliation, kiss and be friends, as Jacob and Esau; let the quarrel between us and God be taken up, let the acts of hostility cease, and let us be at peace with God in Christ, who is our peace. (2.) With a kiss of adoration and religious worship; they that worshipped idols kissed them, 1 Kings xix. 18. *Hos. xiii. 2*. Let us study how to do honour to the Lord Jesus, and to give unto him the glory due to his name. *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*, Psal. xlv. 11. With him that sits on the throne we must worship the Lamb, Rev. v. 9, 10—13. (3.) With a kiss of affection and sincere love, *Kiss the Son*, i. e. enter into a covenant of friendship with him, and let him be very dear and precious to you; love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as he did to whom much was forgiven, and in token of it kissed his feet, Luke vii. 38. (4.) With a kiss of allegiance and loyalty, as Samuel kissed Saul, 1 Sam. x. 1. Swear fealty and homage to him, submit to his government, take his yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his interest.

2. The reasons to enforce this command, and they are taken from our own interest, which God in his gospel shews a concern for. Consider,

1. The certain ruin we run upon, if we refuse and reject Christ. *Kiss the Son*; for it is at your peril if you do not. (1.) It will be a great provocation to him; do it lest he be angry; the Father is angry already, the Son is the mediator that undertakes to make peace, if we slight him, the Father's wrath abides upon us, John iii. 36. and not only so, but there is an addition of the Son's wrath too, to whom nothing is more displeasing than to have the offers of his grace slighted, and the designs of it frustrated. The Son can be angry, though a lamb, he is the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the wrath of this King, the King of kings, will be as the roaring of a lion, and will drive even mighty men and chief captains to seek in vain for shelter in rocks and mountains, Rev. vi. 16. If the Son be angry, who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifice, no other name by which we can be saved: Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. (2.) It will be utter destruction to yourselves, *lest ye perish from the way*, or in the way, so some. In the way of your sins, and from the way of your vain hopes, *lest your way perish*, as Psal. cxvi. lest you prove to have missed the way to happiness. Christ is the way, take heed lest ye be cut off from him as your way to God. It intimates that they were, or at least thought themselves, in the way, but by neglecting Christ, they perished from it, which aggravates their ruin, that they go to hell from the way to heaven; are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never come thither.

2. The happiness we are sure of, if we yield ourselves to Christ. When his wrath is kindled, though but a little, the least spark of that fire is enough to make the proudest sinner miserable, if it fasten upon his conscience, for it will burn to the lowest hell; one would think it should therefore follow, when his wrath is kindled, we be to those that despise him; but the Psalmist startles at the thoughts, blesteth himself from that dreadful doom, and blesteth those that do escape it. They that trust in him, and so kiss him, are truly happy; but they will especially appear to be so, when the wrath of Christ is kindled against others. Blessed will they be in the day of wrath, that by trusting in Christ have made him their refuge and patron; when the hearts of others fail them for fear; they shall lift up their heads with joy; and then those who now despise Christ and his followers will be forced to say it to their own greater confusion, Now we see that blessed are all they, and they only, that trust in him.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should not only have our hearts filled with an holy awe of God, but borne up with a cheerful confidence on Christ, in whose mediation we may comfort and encourage ourselves and one another, *We are the circumcision that rejoice in Christ Jesus*.

As the foregoing psalm, in the type of David in preferment, shewed us the royal dignity of the Redeemer: so this, by the example of David in distress, shews us the peace and holy security of the redeemed: How safe they really are and think themselves to be under the divine protection. David being now driven out from his palace, from the royal city, from the holy city, by his rebellious son Absalom, (1.) Complains to God of his enemies, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Confides in God, and encourageth himself in him as his God notwithstanding, ver. 3. (3.) Recollects the satisfaction he had in the gracious answers God gave to his prayers, and his experience of his goodness to him, ver. 4, 5. (4.) Triumphs over his fears, ver. 6. And over his enemies whom he prays against, ver. 7. (5.) Gives God the glory and takes to himself the comfort of that divine blessing and salvation which are sure to all the people of God, ver. 8. These speak best of the truths of God, that speak experimentally; so David here speaks of the power and goodness of God, and of the safety and tranquillity of the godly.

¶ A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son:

1. **L**ORD, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me. 2. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. 3. But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

The title of this psalm, and many others, is as a key hung ready at the door to open it, and let us into the entertainments of it; when we know upon what occasion a psalm was penned, we know the better how to expound it. This was composed or at least the substance of it was meditated and digested in David's thoughts, and offered up to God then when he fled from Absalom his son, who formed a conspiracy against him, to take away not his crown only but his life; we have the story, 2 Sam. xv. &c. (1.) David was now in great grief, when in his flight he went up to the mount of Olives, he wept greatly, with his head covered, and marching bare-foot, yet then he composed this comfortable psalm. He wept and prayed, wept and sang, wept and believed; this was sowing in tears. Is any afflicted let him pray; nay, let him sing psalms, let him sing this psalm. Is any afflicted with undutiful disobedient children? So was David: and yet that did not hinder his joy in God, nor put him out of tune for holy songs. (2.) He was now in great danger, the plot laid against him was deep, and the party that sought his ruin was very formidable, and his own son at the head of them; so that his affairs seemed to be at the last extremity, yet then he kept hold of his interest in God, and improved that. Perils and frights should drive us to God, not drive us from him. (3.) He had now a great deal of provocation given him by those from whom he had reason to expect better things; from his son, whom he had been indulgent of: from his subjects, whom he had been so great a blessing to; which he could not but resent, and was enough to break in upon any man's temper; and yet he was so far from any indecent expressions of passion and indignation, that he had calmness enough for those acts of devotion which require the greatest fixedness and freedom of thought. It was a sign his mind was very sedate, that the Spirit came upon him, who chooseth to move upon the still waters. Let no unkindness, no not of a child or a friend, ever be laid so much to heart as to dislodge us for communion with God. (4.) He was now suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah, this was the evil which for that sin God threatened to raise up against him out of his own house, 2 Sam. xii. 11. which no doubt he observed, and took occasion from thence to renew his repentance for it: And yet he did not therefore cast away his confidence in the divine power and goodness, nor despair of success. Even our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God, or our hope in God. (5.) He seemed cowardly in fleeing from Absalom, and quitting his royal city, before he had had one puff for it, and yet by this psalm it appears he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True christian fortitude consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patient bearing, and patient waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand.

In these three verses he applies himself to God: Whether else should we go but to him, when any thing grieves us or frightens us? David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray, and yet he could find a way open heaven-wards. Wherever we are we may have access to God, and may draw nigh to him whithersoever we are driven. David in his flight attends his God,

1. With a remonstrance of his distress, ver. 1, 2. He looks round, and doth as it were take a view of his enemies camp, or receive informations of their designs against him, which he brings to God, not to his council-board. Two things he complains of concerning his enemies,

(1.) That they were very many. *Lord, how are they increased!* beyond what they were at first, and beyond whatever he thought they would have been. Absalom's faction, like a snow-ball, strangely gathered in its motion. He speaks of it as one amazed, and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged, should almost generally revolt from him and rebel against him, and choose for their head such a silly, giddy young fellow as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! And how little fidelity and constancy is to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects as much as ever any king had, and yet now of a sudden he had lost them: As people must not trust too much to princes, Psal. cxlvi. 3. so people must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ the son of David had many enemies, when a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, Crucify him, Crucify him, how were they then increased that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange, if the stream be against them, and the powers that threaten them grow more and more formidable.

(2.) That they were very malicious: They rose up against him, they aimed to trouble him; but that was not all, they said of his soul, There is no help for him in God. That is, (1.) They put a spiteful and invidious construction upon his troubles, as Job's friends did upon his, concluding, that because his servants and subjects forsook him thus, and did not help him, God had deserted him, and abandoned his cause, and he was therefore to be looked on, or rather to be looked off, as an hypocrite, and a wicked man. (2.) They blasphemously reflected upon God as unable to relieve him, his danger is so great, that God himself cannot help him. It is strange, that so great unbelief should be found in any, especially in many in Israel, as to think any party of men too strong for omnipotence to deal with. (3.) They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God, and drive him to despair of relief from him. They have said it to my soul, so it may be read, compare Psal. xi. 1.—xlii. 10. This grieved him worst of



all, that they have so ill an opinion of him, as to think it possible to take him off from that bottom: Even the temptation was a buffeting to him, a *thorn in his flesh*, nay a *sword in his bones*. Note, A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God, you cannot vex him with any thing so much as if you offer to persuade him, *there is no help for him in God*. David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spreads Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord, they say, *There is no help for me in thee*; but Lord, if it be so I am undone. They say to my soul, *There is no salvation* (for so the word is) *for him in God*; but Lord, do thou say unto my soul, *I am thy salvation*, Ps. xxxv. 3. and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them. To this complaint he adds *Selah*, which occurs about seventy times in the book of Psalms. Some refer it to the music with which in David's time the psalms were sung; others to the sense, and that it is a note commanding a solemn pause. *Selah*. Mark that, or stop there, and consider a little. As here, they say, *There is no help for me in God, Selah*. Take a time for such a thought as this, *Get thee behind me, Satan; the Lord rebuketh thee!* Away with such a vile suggestion.

2. With a profession of his dependence upon God, ver. 3. An active believer, the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of providence, or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take of him, and the closer will he cleave to him; so David here, when his enemies said, *There is no help for him in God*, he cries out with so much the more assurance, *But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me*; let them say what they will, I am sure thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved, I will never distrust thee. See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him. (1.) Safety: *Thou art a shield for me*, a shield about me, so some, to secure me on all sides since my enemies surround me. Not only *my shield*, Gen. xv. 1. which notes an interest in the divine protection; but a shield for me, which notes the present benefit and advantage of that protection. (2.) Honour: *Thou art my glory*. Those whom God owns for his, are not only safe and easy, but really look great, and have true honour put upon them, far above that which the great ones of the earth are proud of. David was now in disgrace, the crown was fallen from his head, but he will not think the worse of himself while he has God for his glory, *Isa. lx. 19. Thou art my glory*, i. e. thy glory I reckon mine, so some; that is it I aim at and am ambitious of, whatever my lot is, and whatever becomes of my honour, that I may be to my God for a name and a praise. (3.) Joy and deliverance: *thou art the lifter up of my head*, i. e. Thou wilt lift up my head out of my troubles, and restore me to my dignity again in due time; however, thou wilt lift up my head under my troubles, so that I shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail. If in the worst of times God's people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own it is God that is the lifter up of their head, that gives them both cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice.

In singing this and praying it over, we should possess ourselves with an apprehension of the danger we are in from the multitude and malice of our spiritual enemies, that seek the ruin of our souls by driving us from our God, and concern ourselves in the distresses and dangers of the church of God, which is every where spoken against, every where fought against, but in reference to both, we should encourage ourselves in our God who doth own and protect, and will in due time crown his own interest both in the world and in the hearts of his people.

4. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. *Selah*. 5. I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the LORD sustained me. 6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. 7. Arise, O LORD, save me O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone: thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. 8. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. *Selah*.

David having stirred up himself by the irritations of his enemies to take hold on God as his God, and so gained comfort enough in looking upward, when if he looked round about him, nothing appeared but what was discouraging; here looks back with pleasing reflections upon the benefit he had found by trusting in God, and looks forward with pleasing expectations of a bright and happy issue which would shortly be put to the dark dispensation he was now under.

1. See with what comfort he looks back upon the communion he had had with God, and the communications of his favour to him, either in some former troubles he had been in, and through God's goodness got through, or in this hitherto. David had been in his time exercised with many difficulties, often oppressed and brought very low; but still he had found God all-sufficient.

He now remembered with pleasure,

(1.) That his troubles had always brought him to his knees, and in all his difficulties and dangers he had been enabled to acknowledge God, and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice too: And this will be a comfortable reflection. *I cried unto God with my voice*. That cure and grief doth us good and no hurt, which sets us a praying, and engageth us not only to speak to God, but to cry to him, as those that are in earnest. And though God understands the language of the heart, when the voice is not heard, 1 Sam. i. 13. and values not the hypocritical prayers of those who cause their voice to be heard on high, *Isa. lviii. 4.* and that is all, it is *vox & præterea nihil*; yet when the earnestness of the voice comes from the fervency of the heart, notice shall be taken of in the account that we cried unto God with our voice.

(2.) That he had always found God ready to answer his prayers; still he heard me out of his holy hill, from heaven the high and holy place; from the ark on mount Zion, whence he used to give answers to those that sought to him. David had ordered Zadok to carry back the ark into the city, when he was upon his flight from Absalom, 2 Sam. xv. 25. knowing that God was not tied, no not to the ark of his presence, and that notwithstanding the distance of place he could by faith receive answers of peace from the holy hill; no such thing can fix a gulph between the communications of God's grace towards us, and the operations of his grace in us; between his favour and our faith. The ark of the covenant was in mount Zion, and all the answers to our prayers came from the promises of that covenant; Christ was set king upon the holy hill of Zion, *Psal. ii. 6.* and it is through him whom the Father hears always, that our prayers are heard.

(3.) That he had always been very safe and very easy under the divine protection, ver. 5. *I laid me down and slept*, composed and quiet, and awaked refreshed, for the Lord sustained me; (1.) This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone,

and with our families every morning: many have not where to lay their head, but wander in deserts, or if they have, dare not lie down for fear of the enemy; but we have laid us down in peace; many lie them down and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, through pain of body or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down and sleep in safety, though incapable of doing any thing then for our own preservation; many lie down and sleep and never wake again, they sleep the sleep of death, as the first born of the Egyptians; but we lie down and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another day, and whence is it, but because the Lord hath sustained us with sleep as with food, we have been safe under his protection and easy in the arms of his good providence. (2.) It seems here to be meant of the wonderful quietness and calmness of David's spirit in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed and he was easy: The undisturbedness of his son, the disloyalty of his subjects, the treachery of many of his friends, the hazard of his person, the fatigues of his march, and the uncertainty of the event, never lost him an hour's sleep, nor gave any disturbance to his repose, for the Lord by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit powerfully sustained him and made him easy. It is a great mercy when we are in trouble to have our minds stayed upon God, so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment. (3.) Some of the ancients apply it to the resurrection of Christ: in his sufferings he offered up strong cries and was heard, and therefore though he laid him down and slept the sleep of death, yet he awaked the third day, for the Lord sustained him that he should not see corruption.

(4.) That God had many a time broken the power and restrained the malice of his enemies; had smitten them upon the cheek-bone, ver. 7. he silenced them and spoiled their speaking, blemished them and put them to shame, smitten them on the cheek reproachfully; and disabled them to do the mischief they intended, for he had broken their teeth. Saul and the Philistines, that were sometimes ready to swallow him up, could not effect what they designed. The teeth that are gnashed or sharpened against God's people, shall be broken. And when at any time the power of the church's enemies seem threatening, it is good to remember how often God has broken it, and we are sure that his arm is not shortened: He can stop their mouths and tie their hands.

See with what confidence he looks forward upon the dangers he had yet in prospect. Having put himself under God's protection, and often found the benefit of it,

(1.) His fears were all filled and silenced, ver. 6. With what a holy bravery doth he bid defiance to the impotent menaces and attempts of his enemies? *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people*, that either in a foreign invasion or an intestine rebellion set themselves as it were encamped against me round about. No man less safe; his enemies are numerous, ten thousands; they are spiteful and resolute, they have set themselves against me; nay, they have prevailed far, and seemed to have gained their point; for they are against me round about on every side, thousands against one; and yet no man more secure, I will not be afraid for all this, they cannot hurt me, and therefore they shall not frighten me; whatever prudent methods I take for my own preservation, I will not disquiet myself, distrust my God, nor doubt of a good issue at last. When David in his flight from Absalom, bid Zadok carry back the ark, he spoke doubtfully of the issue of his present troubles, and concluded like an humble penitent, *Here I am, let him do with me what seemeth him good*, 2 Sam. xv. 26. But now, like a strong believer, he speaks confidently, and has no fear concerning the event. Note, A cheerful resignation to God is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God.

(2.) His prayers were quickened and encouraged, ver. 7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he therefore prays, *Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God*. Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage our petitions for it. He will for this be enquired of.

(3.) His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies; but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God, and now fees more with him than against him, ver. 8. Two great truths he here builds his confidence upon, and fetcheth comfort from. (1.) That salvation belongeth unto the Lord, i. e. he has power to save, be the danger never so great; it is his prerogative to save, when all other helps and succours fail: it is his pleasure, it is his property, it is his promise to those that are his, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the Lord. Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenor of the new covenant, are sure of salvation; for he that is their God, is the God of salvation. (2.) That his blessing is upon his people; he not only has power to save them, but he has assured them of his kind and gracious intentions towards them. He has in his word pronounced a blessing upon his people, and we are bound to believe that that blessing doth accordingly rest upon them, though there be not the visible effects of it. Hence we may conclude, that God's people, though they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, yet are surely blessed of him, who blesteth indeed, and therefore can command a blessing.

In singing this and praying it over, we must own the satisfaction we have had in depending upon God, and committing ourselves to him, and encourage ourselves and one another to continue still hoping, and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

## P S A L M IV.

David was a preacher, a royal preacher, as well as Solomon; many of his psalms are doctrinal and practical as well as devotional: the greatest part of this psalm is so, in which wisdom cries to men, to the sons of men (as Prov. viii. 4, 5.) to receive instruction. The title doth not tell us, as that of the former did, that it was penned on any particular occasion, nor are we to think that all the psalms were occasional, though some were; but that many of them were designed in general for the instruction of the people of God that attended in the courts of his house, the assisting of their devotions, and the directing of their conversations; such a one I take this psalm to be. Let us not make the prophecy of scripture to be of more private interpretation than needs must, 2 Pet. i. 20. Here (1.) David begins with a short prayer, ver. 1. And that prayer preacheth. (2.) He directs his speech to the children of men, and 1. In God's name reproves them for the dishonour they do to God, and the damage they do to their own souls, ver. 2. 2. He sets before them the happiness of godly people for their encouragement to be religious. 3. He calls upon them to consider their ways, ver. 5. (3.) He exhorts them to serve God and trust in him, ver. 5. (4.) He gives an account of his own experience of the grace of God working in him. 1. Enabling him to choose God's favour for his felicity, ver. 6. 2. Filling his heart with joy therein, ver. 7. 3. Quieting his spirit in the assurance of the divine protection he was under night and day.



To the chief musician on Neginoth.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

**I** HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me *when I was in distress*, have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. 2. O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?* Selah. 3. But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly, for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. 4. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. 5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness: and put your trust in the LORD.

The title of the psalm acquaints us, that David having penned it by divine inspiration for the use of the church, delivered it to the chief musician, or master of the song, who, according to the divine appointment of psalmody made in his time, (which he was chiefly instrumental in the establishment of) presided in that service. We have a particular account of the constitution, the modelling the several classes of fingers, each with a chief, and the share each bore in the work, 1 Chron. xxv. Some prophesied according to the order of the king, ver. 2. Others prophesied with a harp to give thanks and to praise the Lord, ver. 3. Of others, it is said, they were to lift up the horn, ver. 5. But of them all, that they were for song in the house of the Lord, ver. 6. and were instructed in the songs of the Lord, ver. 7. To one of the chiefs was this psalm committed to be sung on Neginoth, i. e. on stringed instruments, Hab. iii. 19. which were played on with the hand; with music of this kind the choristers were to sing this psalm; and it should seem that then they only sung, not the people; but the New Testament appoints all christians to sing, Eph. v. 19. Col. iii. 16. from whom it is expected that they do it decently, not artfully, and therefore there is not now so much occasion for musical instruments as there was then: the melody is to be made in the heart.

In these verses,

1. David addresseth himself to God, ver. 1. Whether the sons of men, to whom he is about to speak, will hear, or whether they will forbear, he hopes and prays that God will give him a gracious audience and an answer of peace: *Hear me when I call*, and accept my adorations, grant my petitions, and judge upon my appeals: *Have mercy upon me, and hear me*. All the notice God is pleased to take of our prayers, and all the return he is pleased to make to them, must be ascribed not to our merit, but purely to his mercy. Hear me for thy mercy's sake, is our best plea. Two things David here pleads further, (1.) *Thou art the God of my righteousness*; not only a righteous God thyself, but the author of my righteous dispositions, who hast by thy grace wrought that good that is in me, but hast made me a righteous man, therefore *hear me*, and so own by own work in me; thou art also the patron of my righteous cause, the protector of my wronged innocency, to whom I commit my way, and whom I trust to bring forth my righteousness as the light. When men condemn us unjustly, this is our comfort, *It is God that justifies*; he is the God of a believer's righteousness. (2.) *Thou hast formerly enlarged me when I was in distress*, enlarged my heart in holy joy and comfort under my distresses, enlarged my condition by bringing me out of my distresses, therefore *now Lord have mercy upon me, and hear me*. The experience we have had of God's goodness to us in enlarging us when we have been in distress, is not only a great encouragement to our faith and hope for the future, but a good plea with God in prayer: *Thou hast, wilt thou not?* for thou art God and changeest not, thy work is perfect.

2. He addresseth himself to the children of men for the conviction and conversion of those that are yet strangers to God, and that will not have the Messiah, the son of David, to reign over them.

1. He endeavours to convince them of the folly of their impiety, ver. 2. *O ye sons of men*, of great men, so some; men of high degree, understanding it of the partisans of Saul and Absalom, how long will ye oppose me and my government, and continue disaffected to it, under the influence of the false and groundless suggestions of those that wish evil to me? Or it may be taken more generally, God by the psalmist here reasons with sinners to bring them to repentance. You that go on in the neglect of God and his worship, and in contempt of the kingdom of Christ and his government, consider what you do; (1.) You debate yourselves, for you are sons of men, (the word signifies man as a noble creature) consider the dignity of your nature and the excellency of those powers of reason with which you are endued, and do not act thus irrationally and unbecomingly yourselves. Let the sons of men consider and shew themselves men. (2.) You dishonour your Maker and turn his glory into shame. They may well be taken as God's own words, charging sinners with the wrong they do him in his honour: or, if David's words, it may be understood of God, whom he called his glory, Psal. iii. 3. Idolators are charged with changing the glory of God into shame, Rom. i. 23. All wilful sinners do so by disobeying the commands of his law, despising the offers of his grace, and giving that affection and service to the creature which is due to God only. Those that profane God's holy name, that ridicule his word and ordinances, and while they profess to know him, in works deny him, do what in them lies to turn his glory into shame. (3.) You put a cheat upon yourselves, *you love vanity and seek after leasing*, or *lying*, or that which is a lie. You are yourselves vain and lying, and you love to be so. Or you set your hearts upon that which will prove at last but vanity and a lie: they that love the world, and seek the things that are beneath, love vanity and seek lies; that please themselves with the delights of sense, and portion themselves with the wealth of this world, for these will deceive them and so ruin them. How long will you do this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, never consider your duty and interest? *When shall it be?* Jer. xiii. 27. The God of heaven thinks the time long that sinners persist in dishonouring him, and in deceiving and ruining themselves.

2. He shews them the peculiar favour which God has for good people, the special protection they are under, and the singular privileges to which they are intitled, ver. 3. This comes in here, (1.) As a reason, why they should not oppose or persecute him that is godly, for think to run him down: It is at their peril, if they offend one of these little ones, whom God has set apart for himself, Matt. xviii. 6. God reckons that those who touch them touch the apple of his eye, and he will make their persecutors to know it sooner or later. They have an interest in heaven, God will hear them, and therefore let none dare to do them any injury, for God will hear their cry and plead their cause, Exod. xxii. 23. It is generally supposed that David speaks of his own designation to the throne;

he is the godly man whom God had set apart for that honour, and who doth not usurp it or assume it to himself; and therefore the opposition you gave to him and to his advancement is very criminal, for therein you fight against God, and it will be vain and ineffectual; God has in like manner set apart the Lord Jesus for himself, that merciful one, and those that attempt to hinder his advancement, will certainly be baffled, for the Father heareth him always. Or, (2.) As a reason why they should themselves be good, and walk no longer in the counsel of the ungodly: you have hitherto sought vanity, be truly religious, and you will be truly happy here and for ever: for, (1.) God will secure to himself his interest in you. *The Lord hath set apart him that is godly*, every particular godly man for himself, in his eternal choice, in his effectual calling, in the special disposals of his providence and operations of his grace: they are purified unto him a peculiar people. Godly men are God's separated sealed ones; he knows them that are his, hath set his image and superscription upon them; distinguisheth them with uncommon favours, and they shall be mine saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels. Know this; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from him to whom they are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects. (2.) God will secure to you an interest in himself; this David speaks with application, *the Lord will hear when I call unto him*. We should think ourselves happy if we had the ear of an earthly prince; and it is not worth while upon any terms, especially such easy ones, to gain the ear of the King of kings? let us know this and forsake lying vanities for our own mercies.

3. He warns them against sin, and exhorts them both to frighten themselves and to reason themselves from it, ver. 4. *Stand in awe and sin not*, be angry and sin not, so the LXX. and some think the apostle takes that exhortation from him, Eph. iv. 26. *commune with your own hearts*, Be converted, and in order thereunto consider and fear. Note, 1. We must not sin, nor miss our way, and so miss our aim. One good remedy against sin is to stand in awe. Be moved, so some, in opposition to carelessness and carnal security; always keep up a holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God, and a holy dread of his wrath and curse, and dare not to provoke him. 3. One good means of preventing sin and preserving a holy awe is to be frequent and serious in *communing with our own hearts*, talk with your hearts; you have a great deal to say to them, they may be spoken with at any time, let it not be unfruitful; A thinking man is in a fair way to be a wise and a good man. *Commune with your hearts*, i. e. Examine them by serious self-reflection, that you may acquaint yourselves with them, and amend what is amiss in them: Employ them with solemn pious meditation, let your thoughts fasten upon that which is good, and keep close to it. Consider your ways, and observe the directions here given us, in order to the doing of this work well and to good purpose. (1.) Choose a solitary time; do it when you lie awake upon your beds. Before you turn you to go to sleep at night (as some of the heathen moralists have directed) examine your consciences what you have done that day, particularly what you have done amiss, that you may repent of it. When you awake in the night, meditate upon God and the things that belong to your peace. David himself did practise what he here counsels others to do, Psal. lxxiii. 6. *I remember thee on my bed*, upon a sick bed particularly, we should consider our way and commune with our own hearts about them. (2.) Compose yourselves into a serious frame; be still. When you have asked conscience a question, be silent and wait for an answer; even in unquiet times keep your spirits calm and quiet.

4. He counsels them to make conscience of their duty, ver. 5. *Offer to God the sacrifice of righteousness*. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. They that were disaffected to David and his government, would soon come to a better temper, and return to their allegiance, if they would but worship God aright; and those that know the concerns that lie between them and God will be glad of the mediator the Son of David. It is required here from every one of us, (1.) That we serve him, *offer sacrifices to him*, your own selves first and your best sacrifices. But they must be sacrifices of righteousness, i. e. good works: all the fruits of the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and all the instances of a religious conversation, which are better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Let all your devotions come from an upright heart; let all your aims be sacrifices of righteousness. The sacrifices of the unrighteous God will not accept, they are an abomination, Isa. i. 11, &c. (2.) That we confide in him, First make conscience of offering the sacrifices of righteousness, and then you are welcome to put your trust in the Lord. Serve God without any diffidence of him or any fear of losing by him. Honour him by trusting in him only, and not in your wealth or in an arm of flesh; in his providence, and lean not to your own understanding; in his grace, and go not about to establish your own righteousness or sufficiency.

In singing these verses we must preach to ourselves the doctrine of the provoking nature of sin, the lying vanity of the world, and the unspeakable happiness of God's people, and press upon ourselves the duties of fearing God, conversing with our own hearts, and offering spiritual sacrifices; and in praying over them, beg of God grace thus to think and thus to do.

6. *There be many that say*, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. 7. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart*, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. 8. *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep*: for thou LORD only makest me dwell in safety.

We have here,

1. The foolish wish of worldly people. *There be many that say*, Who will shew us any good? Who will make us to see good? What good they meant is intimated, ver. 7. It was the increase of their corn and wine; all they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world, that they might enjoy abundance of the delights of sense. Thus far they are right, that they are desirous of good, and solicitous about it: but there are these things amiss in this wish, (1.) They inquire in general who will make them happy, but do not apply themselves to God who alone can, and so expose themselves to be ill advised, and shew they would rather be beholden to any than to God, for they would willingly live without him. (2.) They inquire for good that may be seen, seeming good, sensible good, and were not for the good things that are out of sight, and are the objects of faith only. The source of idolatry was a desire of gods that they might see, therefore they worshipped the sun; but as we must be taught to worship an unseen God, so to seek an unseen good, 2 Cor. iv. 18. We look with an eye of faith further than we can see with an eye of sense. (3.) They inquire for any good, not for the chief good; if it be outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, a good estate, and what are all these worth without a good God and a good heart? Any good will serve the turn of the most of men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so.



so. This way, this wish of carnal worldlings is their folly, and yet many there be that join in it; and so will their doom be; *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things*, the penny thou didst agree for.

2. The wise choice which godly people make. David and the pious few that adhered to him, dissented from that wish, and joined in this prayer, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*. (1.) He disagrees from the vote of the many; God had set him apart for himself by distinguishing favours, and therefore he sets himself apart by a distinguishing character. They are for any good, for worldly good, but so am not I, I will not say as they say; any good will not serve my turn; the wealth of the world will never make a portion for my soul, and therefore I cannot take up with it. (2.) He and his friends agree in their choice of God's favour as their felicity, that is it which in their account is better than life and all the comforts of life.

1. That is it which they most earnestly desire and seek after; that is the breathing of their souls. *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*; most are for other things, but we are for this. Good people, as they are distinguished by their practices, so they are by their prayers, not the length and language of them, but the faith and fervency of them; they whom God hath set apart, have a prayer by themselves, which though others may speak the words of, they only offer up in sincerity; and this is a prayer which they all say amen to; Lord, let us have thy favour and let us know that we have it, and we desire no more, that is enough to make us happy. Lord, be at peace with us, accept of us, manifest thyself to us, let us be satisfied of thy loving-kindness, and we will be satisfied with it. Observe, though David speaks, *ver. 7, 8*, of himself only, here in the prayer he speaks for others also, upon us, as Christ taught us to pray, Our Father; all the saints come to the throne of grace on the same errand, and in this they are one, they all desire God's favour as their chief good. We should beg it for others as well as for ourselves, for in God's favour there is enough for us all, and we shall have never the less for others sharing.

2. That is in it which above any thing they rejoice; *ver. 7*. Thou hast hereby many a time put gladness into my heart, not only supported and refreshed me, but filled me with joy unspeakable, and therefore that is it which I will still pursue, which I will seek after all the days of my life. When God puts grace in the heart, he puts gladness in the heart; nor is any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the divine favour, no, not the joy of harvest, of a plentiful harvest, when the corn and wine increaseth. This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial joy; the mirth of worldly people is but a flash, a shadow, *even in laughter their heart is sorrowful*, Prov. xiv. 13. Thou hast given gladness in my heart, so the word is: True joy is God's gift, not as the world giveth, John xiv. 27. The saints have no reason to envy carnal worldlings their mirth and joy, but should pity them rather, for they may know better, and will not.

3. That is it which they entirely confide in, and in that confidence are always easy, *ver. 8*. He had laid him down and slept, *Psal. iii. 5*. and so he will still, I will lay me down (having the assurance of thy favour) in peace, and with as much pleasure as those whose corn and wine increaseth, and who lie down as Boaz did in his threshing-floor at the end of the heap of corn (to sleep there when his heart was merry,) *Ruth iii. 7*. For thou maketh me to dwell in safety. Though I am alone, yet I am not alone, for God is with me; though I have no guards to attend me, the Lord alone is sufficient to protect me; he can do it himself when all other defences fail. If he have the light of God's countenance, (1.) He can joy himself: His soul returns to God, and reposeth itself in him as its rest, and so he lays him down and sleeps in peace. He has what he would have, and is sure that nothing can come amiss to him. (2.) He fears no disturbance from his enemies, sleeps quiet and is very secure, because God himself has undertaken to keep him safe. When he comes to sleep the sleep of death, and to lie down in the grave, to make his bed in the darkness, he will then with good old Simeon depart in peace, Luke ii. 29. being assured that God will receive his soul to be safe with himself, and that his body also shall be made to dwell in safety in the grave. (3.) He commits all his affairs to God, and contentedly leaves the issue of them with him. It is said of the husbandman, that having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and riseth night and day, and the seed springs and grows up, he knoweth not how, Mark iv. 26, 27. So a good man having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, he sleeps and resteth night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him, welcome his holy will.

In singing these verses and praying over them, let us with a holy contempt of the wealth and pleasure of this world, as insufficient to make us happy, earnestly seek the favour of God, and pleasingly solace ourselves in that favour; and with a holy indifference about the issue of all our worldly concerns, let us commit ourselves and all our affairs to the conduct and custody of the divine providence, and be satisfied that all shall be made to work for good to us, if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

# P S A L M V.

This psalm is a prayer, a solemn address to God, at a time when the psalmist was brought into distress by the malice of his enemies; many such times passed over David, nay there was scarce any time of his life to which this psalm may not be accommodated; for in this he was a type of Christ; that he was continually beset with enemies, and his powerful and prevalent appeals to God when he was so beset, pointed Christ's dependence on his Father, and triumphs over the powers of darkness in the midst of his sufferings. In this psalm, (1.) David settles a correspondence between his soul and God, promising to pray, and promising himself that God would certainly hear him, *ver. 1-3*. (2.) He gives to God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort of God's holiness, *ver. 4-6*. (3.) He declares his resolution to keep close to the public worship of God, *ver. 7*. (4.) He prayed, 1. For himself, that God would guide him, *ver. 8*. 2. Against his enemies, that God would destroy them, *ver. 9, 10*. 3. For all the people of God, that God would give them joy, and keep them safe, *ver. 11, 12*. And this is all of great use to direct us in prayer.

To the chief musician upon Nehiloth.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **G**IVE ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. 2. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God: for unto thee will I pray. 3. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up: 4. For thou art not a God that hath

pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

The title of this psalm has nothing in it peculiar, but that is said to be upon Nehiloth, a word no where else used. It is conjectured (and it is but a conjecture) that it signifies wind-instruments, with which this psalm was sung. As Neginoth was supposed to signify the stringed instruments.

In these verses David had an eye to God,

1. As a prayer-hearing God, and so he has always been, even since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, and yet is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. Observe how David here styles him, *O Lord, ver. 1-3*. Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient being, whom we are bound to adore, and my King and my God, *ver. 2*, whom I have avouched for my God, and to whom I have sworn allegiance, and under whose protection I have put myself as my king. We believe that the God we pray to, is a King and a God, King of kings and God of gods; but that is not enough, the most commanding encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful prevailing plea in prayer, is to look upon him as our King and our God whom we lie under peculiar obligations to, and whom we have peculiar expectations from. Now observe,

(1.) What David here prays for, which may encourage our faith and hopes in all our addresses to God. If we pray fervently and in faith, we have reason to hope, (1.) That God will take cognizance of our case, the remembrance we make of it and the requests we make upon it, for so he prays here: *Give ear to my words, O Lord*. Though God is in heaven, he has an ear open to his people's prayers, and it is not heavy that he cannot hear. Men perhaps will not or cannot hear us, our enemies so haughty that they will not, our friends at such a distance that they cannot; but God, though high, though in heaven, can and will. (2.) That he will take it into his wife and compassionate consideration, and will not slight it, or turn it off with a cursory answer, for so he prays, *Consider my meditation*. David's prayers were not his words only, but his meditations; as meditation is the best preparative for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer should go together, *Psal. xix. 12*. And when we thus consider our prayers, then and then only we may expect that God will consider them, and take that to his heart which comes from ours. (3.) That he will in due time return a gracious answer of peace: for so he prays, *ver. 2*. *Hearken to the voice of my cry*. His prayer was a cry, it was the voice of his cry, which notes fervency of affection and importunity of expression, and such effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much and do wonders.

(2.) What David here promisseth, as the condition on his part to be performed, fulfilled and kept, that he might obtain this gracious acceptance, and this may guide and govern us in our addresses to God, that we may present them aright, for we ask and we have not, if we ask amiss.

Four things David here promisseth, and so must we,

1. That he will pray, that he will make conscience of it and make a business of it, *unto thee will I pray*. Others live without prayer, but I will pray: kings on their own thrones (so David was) must be beggars at God's throne. Others pray to strange gods, and expect relief from them, but to thee, to thee only, will I pray. The assurances God has given us of his readiness to hear prayer, should confirm our resolution to live and die praying.

2. That he will pray in the morning: his praying voice shall be heard then, and then shall his prayer be directed, that shall be the date of his letter to heaven; not that only, morning and evening and at noon will I pray, nay, seven times a day will I praise thee; but that certainly morning prayer is our duty; we are the fittest for prayer when we are in the most fresh and lively and composed frame, got clear of the fumes of the night, revived by them, and not yet filled with the business of the day: We have the most need of prayer, considering the dangers and temptations of the day to which we are exposed, and against which we are concerned by faith and prayer to fetch in fresh supplies of grace.

3. That he will have his eye single and his heart intent in the duty; I will direct my prayer, as a marks-man directs his arrow to the mark, with such a fixedness and steadiness of mind should we address ourselves to God. Or, as we direct a letter to a friend at such a place, so must we direct our prayers to God as our Father in heaven; and let us always direct them to be left with the Lord Jesus, the great mediator, and then they will be sure not to miscarry. All our prayers must be directed to God, i. e. his honour and glory must be aimed at as our highest end in all our prayers; let our first petition be, *Hallowed, glorified be thy name*, and then we may be sure of the same gracious answer to it, that was given to Christ himself, *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*.

4. That he will patiently wait for an answer of peace. I will look up; will look after my prayers, and hear what God the Lord will speak, *Psal. lxxxv. 8*. Heb. ii. 1. that if he grant what I asked I may be thankful, if he deny I may be patient, if he defer I may continue to pray and wait, and may not faint. We must look up or look out, as he that has shot an arrow looks to see how near it has come to the mark: We lose much of the comfort of our prayers for want of observing the returns of them. Thus praying, thus waiting, as the lame man looked stedfastly upon Peter and John, *Acts iii. 4*. we may expect that God will give ear to our words, and consider them, and to him we may refer ourselves, as David here, who doth not pray, Lord, do this or the other for me; but hearken to me, consider my case, and do in it as seemeth good unto thee.

2. As a sin-hating God, *ver. 4, 5, 6*. David takes notice of this, (1.) As a warning to himself and all other praying people, to remember, that as the God with whom we have to do is gracious and merciful, so he is pure and holy; though he is ready to hear prayer, yet if we regard iniquity in our heart he will not hear our prayers, *Psal. lxxvi. 18*. (2.) As an encouragement to his prayers against his enemies; they were wicked men, and therefore enemies to God, and such as he had no pleasure in. See here (1.) The holiness of God's nature, when he saith, *Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness*, he means, thou art a God that hatest it, as directly contrary to thy infinite purity and rectitude, and holy will. Though the workers of iniquity prosper, let none from thence infer, that God hath pleasure in wickedness; no not in that by which men pretend to honour him, or those do that hate their brethren and cast them out, and say, *Let the Lord be glorified*. God has no pleasure in wickedness, though palliated with a cloak of religion: Let those therefore who delight in sin, know that God has no delight in them; nor let any say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God is not the author of sin, neither shall evil dwell with him, i. e. it shall not always be countenanced and suffered to prosper. Dr. Hammond thinks this refers to that law of Moses, which would not permit strangers that persisted in their idolatry to dwell in the land of Israel.

(2.) The justice of his government: The foolish shall not stand in his sight.

i. e.



i. e. shall not be smiled upon by him, nor admitted to attend upon him, nor shall they be acquitted in the judgment of the great day. The workers of iniquity are very foolish: Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools of any others, not fools of God's making, those are to be pitied, he hateth nothing that he has made, but fools of their own making, and those he hates. Wicked people hate God, justly therefore are they hated of him, and it will be their endless misery and ruin; those whom thou hatest, thou shalt destroy, particularly two sorts of sinners, who are here marked for destruction. (1.) Those that are fools, that speak leasing or lying, and that are deceitful. There is a particular emphasis laid on these sinners, *Rev. xxi. 8. All liars, and chap. xxii. 15. Whosoever loves and makes a lie*, nothing more contrary than this, and therefore nothing more hateful to the God of truth. (2.) Those that are cruel; thou wilt abhor the bloody man; for inhumanity is no less contrary, no less hateful to the God of mercy, whom mercy pleaseth. Liars and murderers are in a particular manner said to resemble the devil, and to be his children, and therefore it may well be expected that God should abhor them. These were the characters of David's enemies; and such as these are still the enemies of Christ and his church, men perfectly lost to all virtue and honour! and the worse they are, the surer we may be of their ruin in due time.

In singing these verses and praying them over, we must engage and stir up ourselves in the duty of prayer, and encourage ourselves in it, because we shall not seek the Lord in vain; and must express our detestation of sin, and our awful expectation of that day of Christ's appearing, which will be the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

7. But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple. 8. Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. 9. For there is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness: their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue. 10. Destroy thou them, O GOD; let them fall by their own counsels: cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee. 11. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name, be joyful in thee. 12. For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous, with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

In these verses David gives three characters, of himself, of his enemies, and of all the people of God, and subjoins a prayer to each of them.

1. He gives an account of himself, and prays for himself, *ver. 7. 8.* (1.) He is stedfastly resolved to keep close to God, and to his worship. Sinners go away from God, and so make themselves odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice, but as for me, that shall not keep me from thee; God's holiness and justice are so far from being a terror to the upright in heart to drive them from God, that they are rather by them invited to cleave to him. David resolves, (1.) To worship God, i. e. to pay his homage to him, and give unto God the glory due unto his name. (2.) To worship him publicly; I will come into thy house, the courts of thy house, to worship there with other thy faithful worshippers. David was much in secret worship, prayed often alone by himself, *ver. 2. 3.* and yet was very constant and devout in his attendance on the sanctuary. The duties of the closet are designed to prepare us for, not excuse us from public ordinances. (3.) To worship him reverently, and with a due sense of the infinite distance there is between God and man; *in thy fear will I worship*, with a holy awe of God upon my spirit, *Heb. xii. 28.* God is greatly to be feared by all his worshippers. (4.) To take his encouragement in worship from God himself only. (1.) From his infinite mercy; it is in the multitude of that (the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God, and the innumerable proofs and instances of it which we receive from him, that David confides, and not in any merit or righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy of God should ever be both the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our joy in every thing wherein we have to do with him. (2.) From the instituted medium of worship, which was then the temple, here called the temple of his holiness as a type of Christ, the great and only mediator, who sanctifies the service, as the temple sanctified the gold, and to whom we must have an eye in all our devotions, as they then had to the temple. (2.) He earnestly prays that God by his grace would guide and preserve him always in the way of his duty, *ver. 8. Lead me in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies*, *Heb. because of those which observe me*, which watch for my halting, and seek occasion against me. See here, (1.) The good use which David made of the malice of his enemies against him; the more curious they were in spying faults in him, that they might have whereof to accuse him, the more cautious he was to avoid sin and all appearances of it, and the more solicitous to be always found in the good way of God and duty. Thus by wisdom and grace good may come out of evil. (2.) The right course which David took for the halting of those who sought occasion against him: he committed himself to a divine conduct, begged of God both by his providence and by his grace to direct him in the right way, and keep him from turning aside out of it at any time in any instance whatsoever, that the most critical and captious of his enemies, like Daniel's, might find no occasion against him. The way of our duty is here called God's way and his righteousness, because he prescribes to us by his just and holy laws, which if we sincerely set before us as our rule, we may in faith beg of God to direct us in all particular cases. How this prayer of David's was answered to him, see *1 Sam. xviii. 14, 15.*

2. He gives an account of his enemies, and prays against them, *ver. 9. 10.* (1.) If his account of them be true, as no doubt it is, they have a very bad character; and if they had not been ill men indeed, they could not have been enemies to a man after God's own heart. He had spoken, *ver. 6.* of God's hating the bloody and deceitful man; now, Lord, saith he, that is the character of my enemies. They are deceitful, there is no trusting them, for there is no faithfulness in their mouth: they thought it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but blemish David, and make him odious: *Lord lead me*, saith he, *ver. 8.* for such as these are the men I have to do with, against whose slanders innocency itself is no security. Do they speak fair? Do they talk of peace and friendship? They flatter with their tongues, it is designed to cover their malice, and to gain their point the more securely. Whatever they pretend of religion, or friendship, two sacred things, they are true to neither, their inward part is wickedness

itself, it is very wickedness. They are likewise bloody, for their throat is an open sepulchre, cruel as the grave, gaping to devour and to swallow up; insatiable as the grave, which never saith it is enough, *Prov. xxx. 15, 16.* This is quoted, *Rom. iii. 13.* to shew the general corruption of mankind, for they are all naturally prone to malice, *Tit. iii. 3.* The grave is opened for them all, and yet they are as open graves to one another. (2.) If his prayer against them be heard, as no doubt it is, they are in a bad condition. As men are, and do, so they must expect to fare. He prays to God to destroy them, according to what he had said, *ver. 3.* Thou shalt destroy men of this character. So let them fall, and sinners would soon throw themselves into ruin if they be let alone: to cast them out of his protection and favour, out of the heritage of the Lord, out of the land of the living; and woe to those whom God casts out. They have by their sins, deserved destruction; there is enough to justify God in their utter rejection, *Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions*, by which they have filled up the measures of their iniquity, and are become ripe for ruin; persecuting God's servants fills the measure as soon as any thing, *1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.* Nay, they may be easily made to fall by their own counsels; that which they do to secure themselves, and do mischief to others, by the over-ruling providence of God may be made a means of their destruction, *Psal. vii. 15.—ix. 17.* He pleads, *They have rebelled against thee*: had they been only mine enemies, I could safely have forgiven them; but they are rebels against God, his crown and dignity; they oppose his government, and will not repent to give him glory, and therefore I plainly foresee their ruin. His prayer for their destruction comes not from a spirit of revenge, but from a spirit of prophecy, by which he foretold, That all that rebel against God will certainly be destroyed by their own counsels. If it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people, as we are told it is, *2 Thess. i. 6.* we pray it may be done whenever we pray, *Father, thy will be done.*

3. He gives an account of the people of God, and prays for them, concluding with an assurance of their bliss, which he doubted not of his own interest in. Observe,

(1.) The description he gives of God's people. They are the righteous, *ver. 12.* for they put their trust in God, are well assured of his power and all-sufficiency, venture their all upon his promise, and are confident of his protection in the way of their duty; and they love his name, are well pleased with all that by which God has made himself known, and take delight in their acquaintance with him. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God and dependence on him.

(2.) His prayer for them: *Let them rejoice*; let them have cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice; fill them with joy, with great joy and unspeakable, let them shout for joy, with constant joy and perpetual, let them ever shout for joy, with holy joy, and that which terminates in God, *let them be joyful in thee*, in thy favour, in thy salvation; not in any creature. Let them rejoice because thou coverest them or overshadowest them, dwellest among them. Perhaps it is an allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was to Israel a visible token of God's special presence with them, and the special protection they were under. Let us learn of David to pray not for ourselves only, but for others; for all good people, for all that trust in God and love his name, though not in every thing of our mind, or in our interest: let all that are intitled to God's promises have a share in our prayers; grace be with all that love Christ in sincerity. This is to concur with God.

(3.) His comfort concerning them, *ver. 12.* Therefore he takes them into his prayers, because they are God's peculiar people; therefore he doubts not but his prayers shall be heard, and they shall always rejoice; for, (1.) They are happy in the assurance of God's blessing. *Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous*; wilt command a blessing upon them. Thou hast in thy word pronounced them blessed, and therefore wilt make them truly so: *Those whom thou bledest, they are blessed indeed.* (2.) They are safe under the protection of thy favour; with that thou wilt crown him, so some read it; it is his honour, it will be to him a diadem of beauty, and make him truly great; with that thou wilt compass him, wilt surround him on every side as with a shield. A shield in war guards only one side, but the favour of God is to the saints a defence on every side; like the hedge about Job, round about, so that while they keep themselves under the divine protection, they are entirely safe, and ought to be entirely satisfied.

In singing these verses and praying them over, we must by faith put ourselves under God's conduct and care, and then please ourselves with his mercy and grace, and with the prospect of God's triumphs at last over all his enemies, and his peoples triumphs in him and in his salvation.

## P S A L M VI.

David was a weeping prophet as well as Jeremiah, and this psalm is one of his lamentations; either it was penned at a time, or at least calculated for a time of great trouble both outward and inward. Is any afflicted? Is any sick? Let him sing this psalm. The method of this psalm is very observable, and what we shall often meet with. He begins with doleful complaints, but ends with joyful praises, like Hannah, who went to prayer with sorrowful spirit, but when she had prayed, went her way, and her countenance was no more sad. Three things the psalmist is here complaining of; (1.) Sickness of body. (2.) Trouble of mind, arising from the sense of sin, the meritorious cause of pain and sickness. (3.) The insults of his enemies upon occasion of both. Now here, 1. He pours out his complaints before God, deprecates his wrath, and begs earnestly for the return of his favour, *ver. 1—7.* 2. He assures himself of an answer of peace shortly to his full satisfaction, *ver. 8—10.* This psalm is like the book of Job.

¶ To the chief musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith,

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am weak: O LORD, heal me, for my bones are vexed. 3. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? 4. Return, O LORD, deliver my soul; oh save me for thy mercies sake. 5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? 6. I am weary with my groaning, all the night make I my bed to swim: I water my couch with my tears: 7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

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These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled under humbling providences, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience and mortify corruption. Those heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them; but those are getting ready for mercy who under God's rebukes sow in tears, as David doth here.

Let us observe here,

1. The representation he makes to God of his grievances; he pours out his complaint before him: whether else should a child go with his complaints, but to his father? (1.) He complains of bodily pain and sickness, *ver. 2. My bones are vexed*: his bones and his flesh, like Job's, were touched. Though David was a king, yet sick and pained; his imperial crown would not keep his head from aching. Great men are men, and subject to the common calamities of human life. Though David was a stout man, a man of war from his youth, yet that will not secure him from distempers, which will soon make even the strong men to bow themselves. Though David was a good man, yet neither will his goodness keep him in health; *Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick*. Let this help to reconcile us to pain and sickness, that it has been the lot of some of the best saints, and that we are directed and encouraged by their example to shew before God our trouble in that case, who is for the body, and takes cognizance of its ailments. (2.) He complains of inward trouble; *My soul is also sore vexed*: and that is much more grievous than the vexation of the bones: *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity*, if that be in good plight; but if that be wounded, the grievance is intolerable. David's sickness brought his sin to his remembrance, and he looked upon it as a token of God's displeasure against him; and that was the vexation of his soul that made him cry, *I am weak, heal me*. It is a sad thing for a man at the same time to have his bones vexed, and his soul vexed too: but this has been sometimes the lot of God's own people; nay, and this completed this complicated trouble, it was continued upon them a great while, which is here intimated in that expostulation, *ver. 3. Thou, O Lord, how long?* To the living God we must at such a time apply ourselves, who is the only physician both of body and mind, and not to the Assyrians, not to the god of Ekron.

2. The impression which his troubles made upon him. They lay very heavy, he groaned till he was weary, wept till he made his bed to swim, and watered his couch, *ver. 6*. wept till he had almost wept his eyes out, *ver. 7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief*. David had more courage and consideration than to mourn thus for any outward affliction: but when sin sat heavy upon his conscience, and he was made to possess his iniquities, when his soul was wounded with the sense of God's wrath, and his withdrawings from him, then he takes on thus, and mourns in secret, and even his soul refuseth to be comforted. This not only kept his eyes waking, but kept his eyes weeping. Note 1. It has often been the lot of the best men to be men of sorrows, our Lord Jesus himself was so: our way lies through a vale of tears, and we must accommodate ourselves to the temper of the climate.

2. It well becomes the greatest spirits to be tender, and to relent under the tokens of God's displeasure. David that could face Goliath himself, and any other threatening enemy, with an undaunted bravery, yet melts into tears at the remembrance of sin, and under the apprehensions of divine wrath, and it is no diminution at all to his character. 3. True penitents weep in their retirements. The Pharisees disguised their faces that they might appear unto men to mourn, but David mourns in the night upon the bed where he lay, communing with his own heart, and no eye was a witness to his grief, but his that is all eye. Peter went out, covered his face, and wept. 4. Sorrow for sin ought to be great sorrow, so David's was, he wept so bitterly, and so abundantly, that he watered his couch. 5. The triumphs of wicked men in the sorrows of the saints add very much to their grief. David's eye waxed old because of his enemies, who rejoiced in his afflictions, and put ill constructions upon his tears. In this great sorrow David was a type of Christ, who often wept, and who cried out, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful*, Mark xiv. 34.

3. The petitions which he offers up to God in this sorrowful and distressed state. (1.) That which he dreads as the greatest evil is the anger of God. This was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; it was the infusion of this that made it indeed a bitter cup; and therefore he prays, *ver. 1. O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger*, though I have deserved it, *neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure*. He doth not pray, *Lord, rebuke me not*; *Lord, chasten me not*; for as many as God loves, he rebukes and chastens, as a father the son in whom he delighteth. He can bear the rebuke and chastening well enough, if God at the same time lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and by his Spirit makes him to hear the joy and gladness of his loving kindness; the affliction of his body will be tolerable, if he have but comfort in his soul. No matter though sickness makes his bones ache, if God's wrath do not make his heart ache; therefore his prayer is, *Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath*; let me not lie under the impressions of that, for that will sink me. Herein David was a type of Christ, whose forest complaint in his sufferings was of the trouble of his soul, and of the suspension of his Father's smiles. He never so much as whispered a complaint of the rage of his enemies, why do they crucify me? or the unkindness of his friends, why do they desert me? But he cried with a loud voice, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Let us thus deprecate the wrath of God more than any outward trouble whatsoever, and always take heed of treasuring up wrath against a day of affliction. (2.) That which he desires as the greatest good, and which would be to him the restoration of all good, is the favour and grace of God. He prays, 1. That God would pity him, and look upon him with compassion; he thinks himself very miserable, and misery is the proper object of mercy. And therefore he prays, *Have mercy upon me O Lord*, in wrath remember mercy, and deal not with me in strict justice. 2. That God would pardon his sins; for that is the proper act of mercy, and is often chiefly intended in that petition, *Have mercy upon me*. 3. That God would put forth his power for his relief; *Lord heal me*, *ver. 2. Save me*, *ver. 4. Speak the word, and I shall be whole, and all will be well*. 4. That he would be at peace with him, *Return, O Lord, receive me into thy favour again, and be reconciled to me*. Thou hast seemed to depart from me, and neglect me, nay, to set thyself at a distance, as one angry; but now, Lord, return, and shew thyself nigh to me. 5. That he would especially preserve the inward man, and the interests of that, whatever becomes of the body; *O Lord, deliver my soul from sinning, from sinking, from perishing for ever*. It is an unspeakable privilege, that we have a God to go to in our afflictions, and it is our duty to go to him, and thus to wrestle with him, and we shall not seek in vain.

4. The pleas with which he enforceth his petition; not to move God, he knows our cause, and the true merits of it, better than we can state it; but to move himself. (1.) He pleads his own misery, and that his misery had continued long. *I am weak, I am troubled, sore troubled*; O Lord, how long shall I be so? (2.) He pleads God's mercy, and from thence we take some of our best encouragements in prayer. *Save me, for thy mercies sake*. (3.) He pleads God's glory, *ver. 5. For in death there is no remembrance of thee*. Lord, if thou deliver me and comfort me, I will not only give thee

thanks for my deliverance, and stir up others to join me in these thanksgivings, but I will spend the new life thou shalt intrust me with in thy service, to thy glory, and all the remainder of my days preserve a grateful remembrance of thy favours to me, and be quickened thereby in all instances of service to thee: but if I die, I shall be cut short of that opportunity of honouring thee, and doing good to others; for in the grave, who will give thee thanks? Not but that separate souls live and act, and the souls of the faithful joyfully remember God, and give thanks to him. But (1.) In the second death, (which perhaps David being now troubled in soul under the wrath of God, had some dreadful apprehensions of) there is no pleasing remembrance of God, devils and damned spirits blaspheme him, and do not praise him. Lord, let me not lie always under this wrath, for that is Sheol, it is hell itself, and lays me under an everlasting disability to praise thee. They that sincerely seek God's glory, and desire and delight to praise him, may pray in faith, Lord, send me not to that dreadful place, where there is no devout remembrance of thee, nor any thanks given to thee. (2.) Even the death of the body puts an end to our opportunity and capacity of glorifying God in this world, and serving the interests of his kingdom among men, by opposing the powers of darkness, and bringing many on this earth to know God, and devote themselves to him. Some have maintained, that the joys of the saints in heaven are more desirable, infinitely more so than the comforts of saints on earth; yet the services of saints on earth, especially such eminent ones as David was, are more laudable, and redound more to the glory of the divine grace, than the services of the saints in heaven, who are not employed in maintaining the war against sin and Satan, nor in edifying the body of Christ. Courtiers in the royal presence are most happy, but soldiers in the field are more useful; and therefore we may with good reason pray, that if it be the will of God, and he has any farther work for us or our friends to do in this world, he will yet spare us or them to serve him. To depart and be with Christ is most happy for the saints themselves; but for them to abide in the flesh is more profitable for the church. And this David had an eye to when he pleaded this, *In the grave who shall give thee thanks?* *Psalm xxx. 9.—lxxxviii. 10.—cxv. 17. Isa. xxxviii. 18.* And this Christ had an eye to when he said, *I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world*.

We should sing these verses with a deep sense of the terrors of God's wrath, which we should therefore dread and deprecate above any thing; and with thankfulness, if this be not our condition, and compassion to those who are thus afflicted; if we be thus troubled, let it comfort us that our case is not without precedent, nor, if we humble ourselves and pray as David did, shall it be long without redress.

8. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9. The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer. 10. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed; let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

What a sudden change is here for the better! He that was groaning and weeping, and giving up all for gone, *ver. 6, 7*. here looks and speaks very pleasant. Having made his requests known to God, and lodged his case with him, he is very confident the issue will be good, and his sorrow turned into joy.

1. He distinguisheth himself from the wicked and ungodly, and fortifies himself against their insults, *ver. 8. Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity*. When he was in the depth of his distress, (1.) He was afraid that God's wrath against him would give him his portion with the workers of iniquity; but now that cloud of melancholy was blown over, he is assured that his soul shall not be gathered with sinners, for they are not his people: he began to suspect himself to be one of them, because of the heavy pressures of God's wrath upon him; but now all his fears are silenced, he bids them depart, knowing that his lot is among the chosen. (2.) The workers of iniquity had teased him and taunted him, and asked him, Where was his God? triumphing in his despondency and despair; but now he had wherewith to answer them that reproached him, for God was about to return in mercy to him, had now comforted his spirit, and would shortly complete his deliverance. (3.) Perhaps they had tempted him to do as they did, to quit his religion, and betake himself for ease to the pleasures of sin. But now, depart from me, I will never lend an ear to your counsel, you would have had me to curse God and die; but I will bless him and live. This good use we should make of God's mercies to us, we should thereby have our resolution strengthened never to have any thing more to do with sin and sinners. David was a king, and he takes this occasion to renew his purpose of using his power for the suppression of sin, and the reformation of manners, *Psal. lxxv. 4.—ci. 3.* When God has done great things for us, that should put us upon studying what we shall do for him. Our Lord Jesus seems to borrow these words from the mouth of his father David, when having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*, Luke xiii. 27. and so teaches us to say so now, *Psal. cxix. 115*.

2. He assures himself that God was and would be propitious to him, notwithstanding the present intimations of wrath which he was under. (1.) He is confident of a gracious answer to this prayer which he is now making. While he is yet speaking, he is aware that God hears, as *Isa. lxxv. 24. Dan. ix. 20.* and therefore speaks of it as a thing done, and repeats it with an air of triumph, The Lord hath heard, and again, the Lord hath heard: by the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was graciously accepted, and therefore did not doubt but it would in due time be effectually answered. His tears had a voice, a loud voice in the ears of the God of mercy; and the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping; silent tears are not speechless ones: his prayers were cries to God; and the Lord hath heard the voice of my supplication, has put his fiat to my petitions, and so it will appear shortly. (2.) From thence he infers the like favourable audience of all his other prayers; he has heard the voice of my supplication, and therefore he will receive of my prayer; for he gives, and doth not upbraid with former grants.

3. He either prays for the conversion, or predicts the destruction of his enemies and persecutors, *ver. 10.* (1.) It may very well be taken as a prayer for their conversion; let them all be ashamed of the opposition they have given me, and the censures they have passed upon me: let them be (as all true penitents are) vexed at themselves for their own folly; let them return to a better temper and disposition of mind, and let them be ashamed of what they have done against me, and take shame to themselves. (2.) If they be not converted, it is a prediction of their confusion and ruin. They shall be ashamed and sore vexed, so it may be read, and that justly: they rejoiced that David was vexed, *ver. 2, 3.* and therefore, as usually, it returns upon themselves, they also shall be sore vexed. They that will



not give glory to God, shall have their faces filled with everlasting shame.

In singing this and praying over it, we must give glory to God, as a God ready to hear prayer, must own his goodness to us in hearing our prayers, and must encourage ourselves to wait upon him and to trust in him in the greatest straits and difficulties.

P S A L M VII.

*It appears by the title that this psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, which was the malicious imputations that David was unjustly laid under by some of his enemies. Being thus wronged, (1.) He applies himself to God for favour, ver. 1, 2. (2.) He appeals to God concerning his innocency, as to those things whereof he was accused, ver. 3-5. (3.) He prays to God to plead his cause, and judge for him against his persecutors, ver. 6-9. (4.) He expresseth his confidence in God that he would do so, and would return the mischief upon the head of those that designed it against him, ver. 10-16. (5.) He promiseth to give God the glory of his deliverance, ver. 17. In this David was a type of Christ, who was himself and still is in his members thus injured, but will certainly be righted at last.*

¶ Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

1. **O** LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me. 2. Left he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver. 3. O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands: 4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me: (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:) 5. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it, yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah. 6. Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself, because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded. 7. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high. 8. The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. 9. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Shiggaion is a song or psalm, the word is used so only here and Hab. iii. 1. A wandering song, so some; the matter and composure of the several parts being different, but artificially put together. A charming song, so others: very delightful; David not only penned it, but sang it himself in a devout religious manner unto the Lord, concerning the words or affairs of Cush the Benjamite, i. e. of Saul himself, whose barbarous usage of David bespoke him rather a Cushite or Ethiopian, than a true-born Israelite. Or more likely it was some kinsman of Saul named Cush, who was an inveterate enemy to David, misrepresented him to Saul as a traitor, and (which need not) exasperated Saul against him; one of those children of men, children of Belial indeed, whom David complains of, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. that made mischief between him and Saul. David thus basely abused, has recourse to the Lord: the injuries men do us should drive us to God, for to him we may commit our cause. Nay, he sings to the Lord, his spirit was not ruffled by it nor cast down, but so composed and cheerful, that he was still in tune for sacred songs, and it did not occasion one jarring string in his harp. Thus let the injuries we receive from men, instead of provoking our passions, kindle and excite our devotions. In these verses,

1. He puts himself under God's protection, and flies to him for succour and shelter, ver. 1. *Lord, save me*, and deliver me from the power and malice of all them that persecute me, that they may not have their will against me. He pleads, (1.) His relation to God. Thou art my God, and therefore whither else should I go but to thee? Thou art my God, and therefore my shield, Gen. xv. 1. my God, and therefore I am one of thy servants who may expect to be protected. (2.) His confidence in God: Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee, in thee do I put my trust, and not in any arm of flesh. Men of honour will not fail those that repose a trust in them, especially if they themselves have encouraged them to do so; which is our case. (3.) The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in of being swallowed up by them: Lord, save me, or I am gone; he will tear my soul like a lion tearing his prey, with so much pride, and pleasure, and power, so easily, so cruelly. St. Paul compares Nero to a lion, 2 Tim. iv. 17, as David here compares Saul. (4.) The failure of all other helpers: Lord, be thou pleased to deliver me, for otherwise there is none to deliver, ver. 2. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

2. He makes a solemn protestation of his innocency as to those things whereof he was accused, and by a dreadful imprecation appeals to God the searcher of hearts concerning it, ver. 3, 4, 5. Observe in general, (1.) When we are falsely accused by men, it is a great comfort if our own consciences acquit us. *Elle murus alienus esto, nil conscire sibi*; not only that they cannot prove their calumnies, Acts xxiv. 13. but that our hearts can disprove them to our own satisfaction. (2.) God is the patron of wronged innocency. David had no court on earth to appeal to; his prince that should have righted him, was his sworn enemy; but he had the court of heaven to fly to, and a righteous Judge there, whom he could call his God. And here see,

1. What the indictment is which he pleads not guilty to. He was charged with a traitorous design against Saul's crown and life, that he compassed and imagined to depose and murder him; and in order to that levied war against him. This he utterly denies: he never did this, there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand, ver. 3. he abhorred the thought of it. He never rewarded evil to Saul when he was at peace with him, nor to any other, ver. 4. Nay, as some think it should be rendered, he never rendered evil for evil, never did them mischief that had injured him.

2. What evidence he produceth of his innocency: it is hard to prove

a negative, and yet this was a negative which David could produce very good proof of, ver. 14. *I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.* By this it appeared beyond contradiction, that David had no design against Saul's life: that once and again providence so ordered it, that Saul lay at his mercy, and there were those about him that would soon have dispatched him, but David generously and confidently prevented it, when he cut off his skirt, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. and afterwards, when he took away his spear, 1 Sam. xxvi. 12. to be witnesses for him what he could have done. Saul himself owned both these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity and good affection to him. If we render good for evil, and deny ourselves the gratifications of our passion, it may turn to us for a testimony more than we think of another day.

3. What doom he would submit to if he were guilty, ver. 5. *Let the enemy persecute my soul to the death, and my good name when I am gone, let him lay my honour in the dust.* This intimates, (1.) That if he had been indeed injurious to others, he had reason to expect that they would repay him in the same coin. He that hath his hand against every man, must count upon it that every man's hand will be against him. (2.) That in that case he could not with any confidence go to God, and beg of him to deliver him or plead his cause. It is a presumptuous, dangerous thing for any that are guilty and suffer justly, to appeal to God, as if they were innocent and suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves, and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and not expect that the righteous God will patronise their unrighteousness. (3.) That he was abundantly satisfied in himself concerning his innocency; it is natural to us to wish well to ourselves, and therefore a curse to ourselves if we swear falsely, has been thought as awful a form of swearing as any other. With such an oath or imprecation David here ratifies the protestation of his innocency, which yet will not justify us in doing the like for every light and trivial cause, for the occasion here was important.

3. Having this testimony of his conscience concerning his innocency, he humbly prays to God to appear for him against his persecutors, and backs every petition with a proper plea, as one that knew how to order his cause before God.

1. He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and pleads their wrath against him. *Lord, they are unjustly angry at me, be thou justly angry with them, and let them know that thou art so, ver. 6. In thine anger lift up thyself to the seat of judgment, and make thy power and justice conspicuous, because of the rage, the furies, the outrages (the word is plural) of mine enemies. Those need not fear men's wrath against them, who have God's wrath for them. Who knows the power of his anger?*

2. He prays that God would plead his cause. *Awake for me to judgment, i. e. let my cause have a hearing to the judgment which thou hast commanded, that speaks, (1.) The divine power, as he blesteth effectually, and is therefore said to command the blessing: to be judged effectually, and is therefore said to command the judgment, which is such as none can countermand; for it certainly carries execution along with it. (2.) The divine purpose and promise; it is the judgment which thou hast determined to pass upon all the enemies of thy people. Thou hast commanded the princes and the judges of the earth to right the injured, and vindicate the oppressed; Lord, awaken thyself to that judgment. He that loves righteousness and requires it in others, will no doubt, execute it himself. Though he seem to connive at wrong as one asleep, he will awake in due time, Psal. lxxvii. 65. and will make it to appear, that the delays were no neglects. He prays, ver. 7. *Return thou on high*, maintain thine own authority, resume thy royal throne which they have despised the sovereignty of, and the judgment seat, which they have despised the sentence of. Return on high, i. e. visibly, and in the sight of all, that it may be universally acknowledged, that heaven itself owns and pleads David's cause. Some make this to point at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, who when he returned to heaven, (returned on high in his exalted state) had all judgment committed to him. Or it may refer to his second coming, when he shall return on high to this world, to execute judgment upon all: This return his injured people wait for, and pray for, and to it they appeal from the unjust censures of men. He prays again, ver. 8. *Judge me*, judge for me, give sentence on my side.*

To enforce this suit, (1.) He pleads that his cause was now brought into the proper court. *The Lord shall judge the people*, ver. 8. It is his place: it is his promise, *God is the Judge*, therefore, Lord, judge me. He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he shall do right, and all will be obliged to acquiesce in his judgment. (2.) He insists upon his integrity as to all the matters in variance between him and Saul, and desires no other but to be judged in this matter according to his righteousness, and the sincerity of his heart in all the steps he had taken towards his preferment. (3.) He foretels that it would be much for the glory of God, and the edification and comfort of his people, if God would appear for him. *So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about*, therefore do it for their sakes, that they may attend thee with their praises and services in the courts of thine house. (1.) They will do it of their own accord. God's appearing on David's behalf, and fulfilling his promise to him, would be such an instance of his righteousness, goodness and faithfulness, as would greatly enlarge the hearts of all his faithful worshippers, and fill their mouths with praise. David was the darling of his country, especially of all the good people in it; and therefore when they saw him in a fair way to the throne they would greatly rejoice, and give thanks to God, crowds of them would attend his footstool with their praises for such a blessing to their land. (2.) If David come into power, as God had promised him, he would take care to bring people to church, by his influence upon them, and the ark should not be neglected as it had been in the days of Saul, 1 Chron. xiii. 3.

3. He prays in general for the conversion of sinners and the establishment of saints, ver. 9. *O let the wickedness, not only of my wicked enemies, but of all the wicked, come to an end, but establish the just.* Here are two things which we every one of us must desire, and may hope for. (1.) The period of sin, that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. When corruption is mortified, when every wicked way and thought is forsaken, and the stream which ran violently towards the world and the flesh is driven back, and runs towards God and heaven, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end; when there is a general reformation of manners, when atheists and profane are convinced and converted, when a stop is put to the spreading and infection of sin, so that evil men proceed no further, their folly being made manifest; when the wicked designs of the church's enemies are baffled, and their power broken, and the man of sin is destroyed, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. And this is that which all that love God, and for his sake hate evil, desire and pray for. (2.) The perpetuity of righteousness, *but establish the just.* As we pray that bad may be made good, so we pray that the good may be made better, that they may not be seduced by the wiles of the wicked, nor shocked by their malice; that they may be confirmed in their choice of the ways of God, and in their resolution to persevere therein; may be firm to the interests of God and religion, and zealous in their endeavours to bring



the wickedness of the wicked to an end. His plea to enforce this petition is, for the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins, and therefore the secret wickedness of the wicked he knows, and knows how to bring to an end: and the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to, and has secret ways of establishing.

As far as we have the testimony of an unbiassed conscience for us, that in any instance we are wronged and injuriously reflected on, we may, in singing these verses, lodge our appeal with the righteous God, and be assured that he will own our righteous cause, and will one day, in the last day at furthest, bring forth our integrity as the light.

10. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart. 11. God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. 12. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. 13. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. 14. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. 15. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. 16. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. 17. I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

David having lodged his appeal with God by prayer and a solemn profession of his integrity, in the former part of the psalm, in this latter part doth as it were take out judgment upon the appeal, by faith in the word of God, and the assurance it gives of the happiness and safety of the righteous, and the certain destruction of wicked people, that continue impenitent.

1. David is confident he shall find God his powerful protector and saviour, and the patron of his oppressed innocence, ver. 10. *My defence is of God.* Not only God is my defender, and I shall find him so, but I look for defence and safety in no other: my hope for shelter in a time of danger is placed in God alone: If I have defence, it must be of God. *My shield is upon God,* so some read it; there is that in God which hath an assurance of protection to all that are his. His name is a strong tower, Prov. xviii. 10. Two things David builds his confidence upon. (1.) The particular favour God has for all that are sincere. *He saveth the upright in heart,* saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom; saves them out of their present troubles, as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to think themselves so, under the divine protection. (2.) The general respect he has for justice and equity; *God judgeth the righteous,* i. e. He owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. God is a righteous Judge, so some read it, who not only doth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men, and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness.

2. He is no less confident of the destruction of all his wicked persecutors, even as many of them as would not *repent to give glory to God.* He reads their doom here for their good if possible, that they might cease their enmity; or however for his own comfort, that he might not be afraid of them, nor aggrieved at their prosperity and success for a time. He goes into the sanctuary of God, and there understands, 1. That they are children of wrath; they are not to be envied, for God is angry with them, *is angry with the wicked every day.* They are every day doing that which is provoking to him, and he resents it, and treasures it up *against the day of wrath.* As his mercies are new every morning towards his people, so his anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked, even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days, even in the days of their devotion: for if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their prayers are an abomination. The wrath of God abides upon them, John iii. 36. and continual additions are made to it. 2. That they are children of death, as all the children of wrath are; sons of perdition, marked out for ruin. See their destruction:

(1.) God will destroy them: the destruction they are reserved for is, *destruction from the Almighty,* which ought to be a terror to every one of us, for it comes from the *wrath of God,* ver. 13, 14. It is here intimated, (1.) That the destruction may be prevented by the conversion of the sinner, for it is threatened on that condition; if he turn not from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin: but if he turn, it is implied, that his sin shall be pardoned, and all shall be well. Thus even the threatenings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy, enough to justify God for ever in the destruction of them that perish; they might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die, and their blood is therefore upon their own heads. (2.) That if it be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. In general, ver. 13. *He hath prepared for him the instruments of death,* of all that death which is the wages of sin. If God will say, he will not want instruments of death for any creature, even the least and weakest may be made so when he pleaseth. (1.) Here is variety of instruments, all which breathe threatenings and slaughter. Here is a sword which wounds and kills at hand, a bow and arrows, which wound and kill at a distance those who think to get out of the reach of God's vindictive justice. If the sinner *flee from the iron weapons,* yet the *bow of steel shall strike him through,* Job xx. 24. (2.) These instruments of death are all said to be made ready, God has them not to seek, but always at hand, *judgments are prepared for scorners;* *Prophet is prepared of old.* (3.) While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and *long suffering to us-ward,* *not willing that any should perish.* (4.) The longer the destruction is delayed, to give time to repentance, the sorer will it be, and the heavier will it light, and lie for ever, if that time be not so improved while God is waiting the sword is in the whetting, and the bow in the drawing. (5.) The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it come slowly, yet it comes surely; for it is ordained, they are of old ordained to it. (6.) Of all sinners, persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of divine wrath: against them more than any other God has ordained his arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the reach of his judgments.

(2.) They will *destroy themselves,* ver. 14, 15, 16. The sinner is here described taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul than if directed a right would save it: (1.) It is described by the pains of a labouring woman that brings forth a false conception, ver. 14. The sinner's head with its politics conceives mischief, contrives it with a

great deal of art, lays his plot deep and keeps it close; the sinner's heart with its passions travails with iniquity, and is in pain to be delivered of the malicious projects it is hatching against the people of God. But what doth it come to when it comes to the birth? It is falsehood, it is a cheat upon himself, it is a lie in his right-hand; he cannot compass what he intended; nor if he gain his point, will he gain the satisfaction he promised himself; he brings forth *wind,* Isa. xxvi. 18. *stubble,* Isa. xxxiii. 11. *death,* James i. 15. that is, falsehood. (2.) By the pains of a labouring man, that works hard to dig a pit, and then falls into it, and perishes in it. 1. This is true: in a sense, of all sinners, they prepare destruction for themselves, by preparing themselves for destruction; loading themselves with guilt, and submitting themselves to their corruptions. 2. It is often remarkably true of those who contrive mischief against the people of God, or against their neighbours; by the righteous hand of God it is made to *return upon their own heads,* what they designed for the shame and destruction of others, proves, to be their own confusion. *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua.* Some apply it to Saul, who fell upon his sword.

In the singing this psalm, we must do as David here doth, ver. 17. *praise the Lord according to his righteousness;* i. e. give him the glory of that gracious protection under which he takes his afflicted people, and the just vengeance with which he will pursue them that afflict them; thus we must sing to the praise of the Lord most high, who when his enemies deal proudly, shews that he is above them.

P S A L M VIII.

This psalm is a solemn meditation on, and admiration of, the glory and greatness of God, which we are all concerned to think highly and honourably of. It begins and ends with the same acknowledgment of the transcendent excellency of God's name. It is proposed to be proved, ver. 1. How excellent is thy name in all the earth! And then it is repeated as proved (with a quod erat demonstrandum) is the last verse. For the proof of God's glory, he gives instances of his goodness to man; for God's goodness is his glory. God is to be glorified, (1.) For making known himself and his great name to us, ver. 1. (2.) For making use of the weakness of the children of men, by them to serve his own purposes, ver. 2. (3.) For making even the heavenly bodies useful to man, ver. 3, 4. (4.) For making him to have dominion over the creatures in this lower world, and thereby placing him but little lower than the angels, ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. This psalm is in the New Testament applied to Christ, and the work of our redemption which he wrought out: the honour given by the children of men to him, compare ver. 2. with Matthew, xxi. 16. and the honour put upon the children of men by him, both in his humiliation when he was made little lower than the angels, and in his exaltation when he was crowned with glory and honour, compare ver. 5, 6. with Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8. 1 Cor. xv. 27. When we are observing the glory of God in the kingdom of nature and providence, we should be led by that, and through that, to the contemplation of his glory in the kingdom of grace.

To the chief musician upon Gittith,

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **O** LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who has set thy glory above the heavens. 2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

The psalmist here sets himself to give unto God the glory due unto his name. Dr. Hammond grounds a conjecture upon the title of this psalm concerning the occasion of penning it. It is said to be upon Gittith, which is generally taken for the tune or musical instrument with which this psalm was to be sung; but he renders it upon the Gittite, i. e. Goliath the Gittite, whom he vanquished and slew, 1 Sam. xvii. and then by him, who was in comparison but a babe and suckling, was that enemy killed. The conjecture would be probable enough, but that we find two other psalms with the same title, Psalm lxxxi. and lxxxiv.

Two things David here admires, 1. How plainly God displays his glory himself, ver. 1. He addresses himself to God with all humility and reverence, as the Lord, and his people Lord. *O Lord our Lord.* If we believe that God is the Lord, we must avouch and acknowledge him to be ours. He is ours, for he made us, protects us, and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for we are bound to obey him, and to submit to him; we must own the relation, not only when we come to pray to God, as a plea with him to shew us mercy, but when we come to praise him, as an argument with ourselves to give him glory: And we shall never think we can do that with affection enough, if we consider,

(1.) How bright God's glory shines even in this lower world, *How excellent is his name in all the earth:* The works of creation and providence evince and proclaim to all the world, that there is an infinite being, the fountain of all being, power and perfection, the sovereign ruler, powerful protector, and bountiful benefactor of all the creatures. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent, is his name in all the earth! The light of it shines in mens faces every where, Rom. i. 20. if they shut their eyes against it, that is their fault. There is no speech or language, but the voice of God's name either is heard in it, or may be. But this looks further to the gospel of Christ, by which the name of God, as it is notified by divine revelation, which before was great in Israel only, came to be so in all the earth, the utmost ends of which have thus been made to see God's great salvation, Mark xvi. 16.

(2.) How much brighter it shines in the upper world: thou hast set thy glory above the heavens. (1.) God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest of creatures, and those that shine brightest. (2.) Whereas we on this earth only hear God's excellent name and praise that, the angels and blessed spirits above see his glory and praise that, and yet he is exalted far above even their blessing and praise. (3.) In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the right-hand of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, God set his glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers.

2. How powerful he discovers it by the weakest of his creatures, ver. 2. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength,* or perfected praise, the praise of thy strength, Matt. xxi. 16. This speaks the glory of God, (1.) In the kingdom of nature. The cure God takes of little children when they first come into the world, the most helpless of all animals, the special protection they are under, and the provision nature has made for them, ought to be acknowledged by every one of us to the glory of God.



God, as a great instance of his power and goodness; and the more sensibly because we have all had the benefit of it, for to this we owe it that we did not from the womb, that the knees then prevented us, and the breasts that we should suck; this is such an instance of thy goodness, as we may for ever put to silence the enemies of thy glory, who say there is no God. (2.) In the kingdom of providence; in the government of this lower world he makes use of the children of men, some that know him and others that do not, *Isa. lxxv. 4.* and these such as have been babes and sucklings. (3.) In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Messiah: It is here foretold that by the apostles, who were looked upon as babes, *unlearned and ignorant men, Acts iv. 13.* mean and despicable, and by the foolishness of their preaching, the devil's kingdom should be thrown down, as Jericho's walls were by the sound of ram's horns. The gospel is called the arm of the Lord and the rod of his strength, this was ordained to work wonders, not out of the mouth of philosophers or orators, politicians or statesmen, but of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest external disadvantages that could be; and a specimen of this was given in the children's crying, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, when the chief priests and Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him; to that therefore our Saviour applies this, *Matt. xxi. 16.* and by it filled the enemy. Sometimes the grace of God appears wonderfully in young children, and he teacheth them knowledge, and maketh them to understand doctrine, who are but newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast, *Isa. xxviii. 9.* Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments, and confounds the noble, wise and mighty, by the base, and weak, and foolish things of the world, that no flesh might glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power may the more evidently appear to be of God and not of man, *1 Cor. i. 27, 28.* This he doth because of his enemies, because they are insolent and haughty, that he may still them, may put them to silence and put them to shame, and so be justly avenged on the avengers: see *Acts iv. 14—vi. 10.* The devil is the great enemy and avenger, and by the preaching of the gospel he was in a great measure stilled, his oracles were silenced, the advocates of his cause were confounded, and unclean spirits themselves not suffered to speak.

In singing this let us give God the glory of his great name, and the great things he has done by the power of his gospel, in the chariot of which the exalted Redeemer rides forth, conquering and to conquer, and ought to be attended not only with our praises, but with our best wishes: praise is perfected, i. e. God is in the highest degree glorified, when strength is ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

3. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; 4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? 5. For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; and thou hast put all things under his feet: 7. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field: 8. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. 9. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

David here goes on to magnify the honour of God by recounting the honours he has put upon man; especially the man Christ Jesus: the condescensions of the divine grace call for our praises as much as the elevations of the divine glory; how God has condescended in favour of man, the psalmist here observes with wonder and thankfulness and recommends it to our thoughts. See here,

1. What it is that leads him to admire the condescending favour of God to man; it is his consideration of the lustre and influence of the heavenly bodies, which are within the view of sense, *ver. 3.* I consider thy heavens, and there particularly the moon and the stars. But why doth he not take notice of the sun, which much excelleth them all? Probably, because it was in a night-walk by moon-light that he entertained and instructed himself with this meditation, when the sun was not within view, but only the moon and the stars; which though they are not altogether so serviceable to man as the sun is, yet are no less demonstrations of the wisdom, power and goodness of the Creator. Observe, (1.) It is our duty to consider the heavens. We see them, we cannot but see them, by this among other things man is distinguished from the beasts, that while they are so framed as to look downwards to the earth, man is made erect to look upwards towards heaven; *Os homini sublime dedit, cælumque tueri iussit*, that thus he may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see has not its due influence upon us, unless we consider it. (2.) We must always consider the heavens as God's heavens; not only as the world is his, even the earth and the fulness thereof, but in a more peculiar manner, *The heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's, Psal. cxv. 16.* they are the place of the residence of his glory, and we are taught to call him Our Father in heaven. (3.) They are therefore his, because they are the work of his fingers, he made them, he made them easily, the stretching out of the heavens needed not any out-stretched arm, it was done with a word, it was but the work of his fingers: He made them with very great curiosity and fineness, like a nice piece of work which the artist makes with his fingers. (4.) Even the lesser lights, the moon and stars, shew the glory and power of the Father of lights, and furnishes us with matter for praise. (5.) The heavenly bodies are not only the creatures of the divine power, but subject to the divine government; God not only made them but ordained them. And the ordinances of heaven can never be altered. But how does this come in here to magnify God's favour to man? (1.) When we consider how the glory of God shines in the upper world, we may well wonder he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man: That he who is resident and president over that bright and blessed part of the creation, should humble himself to behold the things done upon this earth, see *Psal. cxiii. 5, 6.* (2.) When we consider of what great use the heavens are to men on earth, and how the lights of heaven are divided unto all nations, *Deut. iv. 19. Gen. i. 15.* we may well say, *Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst settle the ordinances of heaven, with an eye to him and his benefit, and that his comfort and convenience should be so much consulted in the making of the rights of heaven and directing their motions!*

2. How he expresseth this admiration, *ver. 4.* *Lord, what is man!* *Enosh*, sinful, weak, miserable man, a creature so forgetful of thee, and his duty to thee, that thou art thus mindful of him; that thou takest cognizance of him, and of his actions and affairs! that in the making of the world thou hadst a respect to him; What is the son of man that thou visitest him? dost not only feed him, and clothe him, protect him and provide for him in common

with other creatures, but visitest him, as one friend visits another; art pleased to converse with him, and concern thyself for him! What is man, so mean a creature, that he should be thus honoured, so sinful a creature that he should be thus countenanced and favoured! Now this refers,

(1.) To mankind in general; though man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, *Job xxv. 6.* yet God puts a respect upon him, and shews him abundance of kindness; man is above all the creatures in this lower world, the favourite and darling of providence. For,

(1.) He is of a very honourable rank of beings. We may be sure he takes place of all the inhabitants of this lower world, for he is made but a little lower than the angels, *ver. 5.* lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth, and to the beasts that perish, and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he is so near a kin to the holy angels, that he may be truly said to be but a little lower than they, and is in order next to them. He is but for a little while lower than the angels, while his great soul is cooped up in a house of clay, but the children of the resurrection shall be *equal to angels, peers*, *Luke xx. 36.* and no longer lower than they.

(2.) He is endued with noble faculties and capacities; *thou hast crowned him with glory and honour*; he that gave him his being has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures; for having made him wiser than the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven, *Job xxxv. 11.* he has made him fit to rule them, and it is fit they should be ruled by him. Man's reason is his crown of glory, let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it, nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates.

(3.) He is invested with a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures under God, and is constituted their lord. He that made them, and knows them, and whose own they are, has made man to have dominion over them, *ver. 6.* His charter by which he holds this royalty bears equal date with his creation, *Gen. i. 28.* and was renewed after the flood, *Gen. ix. 2.* God has put all things under man's feet, that he might serve himself not only of the labour, but of the products and lives of the inferior creatures; they are all delivered into his hand, nay, they are all put under his feet. He instanteth in some of the inferior animals, *ver. 7, 8.* not only sheep and oxen, which man takes care of and provides for; but the beasts of the field, as well as those of the flood, yea, and those creatures which are most at a distance from man, as the fowl of the air, yea, and the fish of the sea, which live in another element, and pass unseen through the paths of the seas, Man has arts to take these; though many of them are much stronger, and many of them are much swifter than he, yet one way or other he is too hard for them, *James iii. 7.* *Every kind of beasts, and birds, and things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed*; he has likewise liberty to use them as he has occasion; *Rise, Peter, kill and eat, Acts x. 13.* Every dish of fish or fowl that comes to our table, is an instance of this dominion man has over the works of God's hands; and it is a reason for our subjection to God our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

(2.) But this refers in a particular manner to Jesus Christ, of him we are taught to expound it, *Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8.* where the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ both in heaven and in earth, shews that he is that man, that son of man here spoken of, whom God has crowned with glory and honour, and made to have dominion over the works of his hands. And it is certain, that the greatest favour that ever was shewed to the human race, and the greatest honour that ever was put upon the human nature, was by the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, far beyond the favours and honours done us by creation and providence; though those also are great, and far more than we deserve.

We have reason humbly to value ourselves by it, and thankfully to admire the grace of God in it.

1. That Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and in that nature humbled himself. He became the son of man, a partaker of flesh and blood; being so, God visited him; which some apply to his sufferings for us, for it is said, *Heb. ii. 9.* by the suffering of death, a visitation in wrath, *he was crowned with glory and honour.* God visited him; i. e. having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod and with stripes, that we by them might be healed. He was for a little while (so the apostle interprets it) made lower than the angels, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation.

2. That in that nature he is exalted to be Lord of all; God the Father exalted him because he had humbled himself; *crowned him with glory and honour*, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were; set him at his own right hand; constituted him not only the head of the church, but head over all things to the church; and gave all things into his hand, intrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence, in conjunction with and subserviency to the kingdom of grace. All the creatures are put under his feet: and even in the days of his flesh he gave some specimens of his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute.

With good reason therefore doth the Psalmist conclude as he began, *Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!* which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his gospel, and governed by his wisdom and power. And in singing this, and praying it over, though we must not forget to acknowledge with suitable affections God's common favours to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, yet we must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, and submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting till we see all things put under him, and all his enemies made his footstool.

## P S A L M IX.

In this psalm, (1.) David praiseth God for pleading his cause, and giving him victory over his enemies, and the enemies of his country, *ver. 1—6.* and calls upon others to join with him in his songs of praise, *ver. 11, 12.* (2.) He prays to God that he might have still farther occasion to praise him, for his own deliverances, and the confusion of his enemies, *ver. 13, 14, 19, 20.* (3.) He triumphs in the assurance he had of God's judging the world, *ver. 7, 8.* protecting his oppressed people, *ver. 9, 10, 18.* and bringing his and their implacable enemies to ruin, *ver. 15, 16, 17.* And this is very applicable to the kingdom of the Messiah, the enemies of which have been in part destroyed already, and shall be yet more and more, till they all be made his footstool; which we are to assure ourselves of, that God may have the glory, and we may take the comfort.

To the chief musician upon Muth-labben.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. I WILL praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart, I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. 2. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thee, O LORD, in the congregation, and thou shalt be praised.



to thy name, O thou Most High. 3. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. 4. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause, thou sattest in the throne judging right. 5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. 6. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities, their memorial is perished with them. 7. But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. 8. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. 9. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. 10. And they that know thy name, will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

The title of this psalm gives a very uncertain sound concerning the occasion of penning it. It is upon Muth-labben, which some make to refer to the death of Goliath, others of Nabal, others of Absalom; but I incline to think it signifies only some tune or musical instrument to which this psalm was intended to be sung; and that the enemies he is here triumphing in the defeat of are the Philistines, and other the neighbour nations that opposed his settlement in the throne; whom he contested with, and subdued in the beginning of his reign, 2 Sam. v. and viii.

In these verses,

1. David excites and engages himself to praise God for his mercies, and the great things he had of late done for him and his government, ver. 1, 2. Note, (1.) God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous works. 2. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity, with our hearts and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty with our whole heart. (3.) When we give thanks for some one particular mercy, we should take occasion from thence to remember former mercies, and so to shew forth all his marvellous works. (4.) Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy; *I will be glad and rejoice in thee.* (5.) Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it and terminate in God only; *I will be glad and rejoice in thee*, not in the gift so much as in the giver. (6.) Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing of psalms. (7.) When God has shewed himself to be above the proud enemies of the church, we must take occasion from thence to give glory to him as the Most High. (8.) The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed: see Rev. xii. 10—xix. 5—xv. 3, 4.

2. He acknowledges the Almighty power of God, as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with or stand before, ver. 3. But, (1.) They are forced to turn back, their policy and their courage fail them, so that they cannot, they dare not push forward in their enterprises, but retire with precipitation. (2.) When once they turn back they fall and perish, even their retreat will be their ruin, and they will save themselves no more by flying than by fighting. If Haman begin to fall before Mordecai, he is a gone man, and shall prevail no more, see Esth. vi. 13. (3.) The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, is sufficient for the destruction of his and his people's enemies. That is easily done which a man doth with his very presence; with that God confounds his enemies, such a presence has he. This was fulfilled, when our Lord Jesus with one word, *I am he*, made his enemies to fall back at his presence, John xviii. 6. and at the same time could have made them perish. (4.) When the enemies of God's church are put to confusion, we must ascribe it to the power, not of instruments, but of his presence, and give him all the glory.

3. He gives to God the glory of his righteousness, in his appearing on his behalf, ver. 4. *Thou hast maintained my right and my cause*, i. e. my righteous cause, when that came on, thou sattest in the throne judging right. Observe, (1.) God sits in the throne of judgment; to him it belongs to decide controversies, determine appeals, to right the injured, and to punish the injurious, for he hath said, Vengeance is mine. (2.) We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and with him there is no unrighteousness: Far be it from God that he should pervert justice. If there seems to us to be some irregularity in the present decisions of providence; yet those, instead of shaking our belief of God's justice, may seem to strengthen our belief of the judgments to come which will set all to rights. (3.) Whoever disown and desert a just and injured cause, we may be sure that the righteous God will maintain it, and plead it with jealousy, and will never suffer it to be run down.

4. He records with joy the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell, and attends those triumphs with his praises, ver. 5. By three steps the power and justice of God had proceeded against the heathen and wicked people, that were enemies to the king God had lately set up upon his holy hill of Zion. (1.) He had checked them; *Thou hast rebuked the heathen*, i. e. hast given them real proofs of thy displeasure against them: This he did before he destroyed them, that they might have taken warning by the rebukes of providence, and so have prevented their own destruction. (2.) He had cut them off: *Thou hast destroyed the wicked*. The wicked are marked for destruction, and some are made monuments of God's vindictive justice, and destructive power in this world. (3.) He had buried them in oblivion and perpetual infamy, had put out their name for ever, that they should never be remembered with any respect.

(5.) He exults over the enemy whom God thus appears against, ver. 6. *Thou hast destroyed cities*. Either thou, O enemy, hast destroyed our cities, at least in intention and imagination; or thou, O God, hast destroyed their cities by the destruction brought upon their country. It may be taken either way, for the psalmist will have the enemy to know, (1.) That their destruction is just; and God was but speaking with them for all the mischief which they had done and designed against his people. The malicious and vexatious neighbours of Israel, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Syrians, had made incursions upon them, when there was no king in Israel to fight their battles, and destroyed their cities, and done what they could to make their memorial perish with them; but now the wheel was turned upon them, their destructions of Israel were come to a perpetual end, they shall now cease to spoil, and must themselves be spoiled. Isa. xxxiii. 1. (2.) That it is total and final; such a destruction as should make a perpetual end of them, so that the very memorial of their cities should perish with them. So denouncing a thing is final, and much more: such denunciations as the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been reduced to such

ruins that their very memorial is perished, and those that have fought them could not find where they stood; but we look for a city that has stronger foundation than those.

6. He comforts himself and others in God, and pleaseth himself with the thoughts of him.

1. With the thoughts of his eternity; on this earth we see nothing durable, even strong cities are buried in rubbish and forgotten, but the Lord shall endure for ever, ver. 7. There is no change of his being; his felicity, power and perfection are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed, Psal. xxix. 10.—xciii. 2.

2. With the thoughts of his sovereignty both in government and judgment. He hath prepared his throne, has fixed it by his infinite wisdom, has fixed it by his immutable counsel; it is the great support and comfort of good people, when the power of the church's enemies is threatening, and the posture of its affairs melancholy and perplexed, that God doth now rule the world, and will shortly judge the world.

3. With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness in all the administrations of his government; he doth all every day, he will do all at the last day according to the eternal unalterable rules of equity, ver. 8. *He shall judge the world*, all persons, and all controversies, shall minister judgment to the people, shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state, in righteousness and in uprightness, so that there shall not be the least colour of exception against it.

4. With the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people, and the special protection which he takes them under. The Lord that endures for ever is their everlasting strength and protection; he that judgeth the world will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed, ver. 9. He will be a refuge for the oppressed; a high place, a strong place for the oppressed in time of trouble. It is the lot of God's people to be oppressed in this world, and to have troublous times appointed to them; perhaps God may not presently appear for them as their deliverer and avenger, but in the midst of their distresses they may by faith fly to him as their refuge, and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them.

5. With the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which they have that make God their refuge, ver. 10. *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee*, as I have done, for the grace of God is the same in all the saints, and then they will find, as I have found, that thou dost not forsake them that seek thee, for the favour of God is the same towards all the saints. Note, 1. The better God is known the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom, will trust him further than they can see him, Job xxxv. 14. to be a God of almighty power, will trust him when creature confidences fail, and they have nothing else to trust to, 2 Chron. xx. 12. and to be a God of infinite grace and goodness, will trust him, though he slay them, Job xiii. 15. Those that know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness, will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred, and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those that know him to be the Father of spirits and an everlasting father, will trust him with their souls as their main care, and trust him at all times, even to the end. 2. The more God is trusted, the more he is sought unto. If we trust God, we will seek him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by a constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversation. 3. God never did, nor ever will disown or desert any that duly seek to him and trust in him. Though he afflict them, he doth not leave them, he doth not leave them comfortless; though he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

11. Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. 12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. 13. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death: 14. That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation. 15. The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid, is their own foot taken. 16. The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah. 17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. 18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. 19. Arise, O LORD, let not man prevail, let the heathen be judged in thy fight. 20. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

In these verses,

1. David having praised God himself, calls upon and invites others to praise him likewise, ver. 11. Those who believe God is greatly to be praised, not only desire to do that work better themselves, but desire that others also may join with them in it, and would gladly be instrumental to bring them to it. *Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion*. As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type: There he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services: In all our praises we should have an eye to God as dwelling in Zion, in a special manner present in the assembly of his people, as their protector and patron. He resolved himself to shew forth God's marvellous work, ver. 2. and here he called upon others to declare among the people his doings: he commands his own subjects to do it, for the honour of God, of their country, and of their holy religion: he courts his neighbours to do it; to sing praises not as hitherto to their false gods, but to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion, to the God of Israel, and to ours among the heathen, that the Lord has done great things for his people Israel, Psal. cxxvi. 3, 4. Let them particularly take notice of the justice of God in avenging the blood of his people Israel on the Philistines and other their wicked neighbours, who had in making war upon them used them barbarously and given them no quarter, ver. 12. When God comes to make inquisition for blood by his judgments on earth, before he comes to do it by the judgment of the great day, he remembereth them, remembereth every



every drop of the innocent blood which they have shed, and will return it sevenfold upon the head of the blood-thirsty; he will give them blood to drink, for they are worthy. This assurance he might well build upon that word, *Deut. xxxii. 43. He will avenge the blood of his servants.* Note, There is a day coming when God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and revenge what has been shed unjustly, see *Isa. xxvi. 21. Jer. li. 35.* In that day it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him, *Psal. lxxii. 14.* when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten the cry of the humble, nor the cry of their blood, nor the cry of their prayers, but both are sealed up among his treasures.

2. David having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that God would still appear for him; for he sees not yet all things put under him. He prays, (1.) That God would be compassionate to him, *ver. 13. Have mercy upon me, who having misery only, and no merit to speak for me, must depend upon mere mercy for relief.* 2. That he would be concerned for him; he is not particular in his request, lest he should seem to prescribe to God, but refers himself to the wisdom and will of God in this modest request, Lord, consider my trouble, and do for me as thou thinkest fit. He pleads, (1.) The malice of his enemies, the trouble which he suffered of them that hated him; and hatred is a cruel passion. (2.) The experience he had had of divine succours, and the expectations he now had of the continuance of them; as the necessity of his case required: *O thou that liftest me up, that canst do it, thou hast done it, that wilt do it, whose prerogative it is to lift up thy people from the gates of death.* We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may from thence take encouragement to hope, that in all our distresses he will be a very present help to us. (3.) His sincere purpose to praise God, when his victories should be completed, *ver. 14. Lord, save me, not that I may have the comfort and credit of it, but that thou mayest have the glory, That I may shew forth all thy praise;* and that publicly, *in the gates of the daughter of Zion, there God was said to dwell, ver. 11.* and there David would attend him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Son of David.

3. David by faith foresees and foretells the certain ruin of all wicked people both in this world and that to come. (1.) In this world, *ver. 15, 16. God executeth judgment upon them, when the measure of their iniquities is full, and doth it so, as (1.) To put shame upon them, and make their fall inglorious, for they sink into the pit which they themselves digged (Psal. vii. 15.) they are taken in the net which they themselves laid for the ensnaring of God's people; and they are snared in the work of their own hands. In all the struggles David had with the Philistines, they were the aggressors, 2 Sam. v. 17—22. And other nations were subdued by those wars in which they embroiled themselves. And many times the over-ruling providence of God so orders it, that their persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by those very projects which they intended to be destructive to the people of God: Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentions bring mischief upon themselves; and thus men's sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all, that the destruction of sinners is not only meritoriously, but efficiently of themselves, which will fill them with the utmost confusion.* (2.) So as to get honour to himself: *The Lord is known, i. e. He makes himself known by these judgments which he executeth.* It is known there is a God who judgeth in the earth; that he is a righteous God, and one that hates sin, and will punish it: in these the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And therefore the psalmist adds here a note extraordinary, commanding special regard, Higgaion; it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of present judgments and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations. (2.) In the other world, *ver. 17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, as captives into the prison-house, even all the nations that forget God.* Note, 1. That forgetfulness of God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked. 2. There are nations of those that forget God, multitudes that live without God in the world, many great and many mighty nations who never regard him, nor desire the knowledge of his ways. 3. Hell will at last be the portion of such, a state of everlasting misery and torment. *Sheol, a pit of destruction, in which they and all their comforts will be forever lost and buried: Though there be nations of them, yet they shall be turned into hell, and like sheep into the slaughter-house, Psal. xlix. 14.* and their being so numerous, will neither be any security or ease to them, nor any loss to God, or the least impeachment to his goodness.

4. David encourageth the people of God to wait for his salvation, though it should be long deferred, *ver. 18. The needy may think themselves, and others may think them forgotten for a while, and their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished and to have been for ever frustrated; but he that believeth doth not make haste, the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak: we may build upon it as undoubtedly true, that God's people, God's elect, shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed in their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them at last, but will make it appear that he never did forget them, it is impossible he should, though a woman may forget her sucking child.*

5. He concludes with prayer, that God would humble the pride, break the power, and blast the projects of all the wicked enemies of his church. *Arise, O Lord; ver. 19. stir up thyself, exert thy power, take thy seat, and deal with all these proud and daring enemies of thy name, and cause, and people: (1.) Lord, restrain them, and set bounds to their malice. Let not man prevail, consult thine own honour, and let not weak and mortal men prevail against the kingdom and interest of the almighty and immortal God. Shall mortal man be too hard for God, too strong for his Maker? (2.) Lord, reckon with them, Let the heathen be judged in thy sight, i. e. let them be plainly called to an account for all the dishonour done to thee and the mischief done to thy people. Impenitent sinners will be punished in God's sight, and when their day of grace is over, the bowels even of infinite mercy will not relent towards them, Rev. xiv. 10. (3.) Lord, frighten them, ver. 20. Put them in fear, O Lord; or strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with thy judgments. God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble and to flee when none pursues; and thereby he makes to know that they are but men, and own it; they are but weak men, unable to stand before the holy God; sinful men, the guilt of whose consciences makes them subject to frights. Note, it is a very desirable thing, much for the glory of God, and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know and consider themselves to be but men, dependent creatures, mutable, mortal, and accountable.*

In singing this we must give to God the glory of his justice, in pleading the people's cause against his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed and the year of recompence for the controversy of Zion, even the final destruction of all anti-Christian powers and factions, to which many of the ancients apply this psalm:

P S A L M X.

The Septuagint translation joins this psalm with the ninth, and makes them but one; but the Hebrew makes it a distinct psalm, and the scope and style is different. In this psalm, (1.) David complains of the wickedness of the wicked, and describes the mighty pitch of impiety to which they were arrived, to the great dishonour of God and the prejudice of his church and people, and the delay of God's appearing against them, *ver. 1—11.* (2.) He prays to God to appear against them for the relief of his people, and comforts himself with hopes that he would do so in due time, *ver. 12—18.*

1. **W**HY standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? 2. The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. 3. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth. 4. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. 5. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. 6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. 7. His mouth is full of cursing, and deceit, and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. 8. He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. 9. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor when he draweth him into his net. 10. He croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones. 11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face, he will never see it.

David in these verses discovers,

1. A very great affection to God and his favour, for in the time of trouble that which he complains of most feelingly, is God's withdrawing his gracious presence, *ver. 1. Why standest thou afar off,* as one unconcerned in the indignities done to thy name and the injuries done to thy people? Note, God's withdrawals are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially in times of trouble. Outward deliverance is afar off and is hidden from us, and then we think God is afar off, and we therefore want inward comfort; but that is our own fault, it is because we judge by outward appearance, we stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us.

2. A very great indignation against sin, the sins that made the times perilous, 2 Tim. iii. 1. He beholds the transgressors and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report: Not in a way of vain-glory, boasting before God that he was not as these publicans, Luke xviii. 11. much less venting any personal resentments, piques or passions of his own; but as one that laid to heart that which is offensive to God and all good men, and earnestly desired a reformation of manners. Passionate and satirical invectives against bad men do more hurt than good; if we will speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer, for he alone can make them better.

This long remonstrance of the wickedness of the wicked, is here summed up in the first words of it, *ver. 2. The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor,* where two things are laid to their charge, pride and persecution; the former the cause of the latter; proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion and acquiescence in their dictates; and those that either eclipse them, or will not yield to them, they malign and are inveterate in their hatred of them. Tyranny both in state and church owes its original to pride. The psalmist having begun this description, presently inserts a short prayer, a prayer in a parenthesis, which is an advantage, and no prejudice to the sense; *Let them be taken, as proud people often are, in the devices that they have imagined, ver. 2. Let their counsels be turned head-long, and let them fall head-long by them.*

These two heads of the charge are here enlarged upon.

1. They are proud, very proud, and extremely conceited of themselves; justly therefore did he wonder that God did not speedily appear against them, for he hates pride, and resists the proud.

(1.) The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. He *boasteth of his heart's desire*, brags that he can do what he pleaseth, as if God himself could not controul him: and that he had all he wished for, and has carried his point. Ephraim said, *I am become rich, I have found me out substance, Hos. xii. 8.* Now, Lord, is it for thy glory to suffer a sinful man thus to pretend to the sovereignty and felicity of a god?

(2.) He proudly contradicts the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; for he *blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhors.* See how God and men differ in their sentiments of persons; God abhors covetous worldlings, who make money their god, and idolize it, he looks upon them as his enemies, and will have no communion with them; *The friendship of the world is enmity to God.* But proud persecutors blesst them, and approve their sayings, *Psal. xlix. 13. They applauded them as wise, whom God pronounces foolish, Luke xii. 20. They justify them as innocent, whom God condemns as deeply guilty before him; and they admire them as happy in having their portion in this life, whom God declares upon that account truly miserable; Thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things.*

(3.) He proudly casts off the thoughts of God, and all dependance upon him, and devotion to him, *ver. 4. The wicked through the pride of his countenance, that pride of his heart which appears in his very countenance, Prov. vi. 17. will not seek after God; nor entertain the thoughts of him; God is not in all his thoughts, i. e. not in any of them, All his thoughts are that there is no God.* See here, 1. The nature of impiety and irreligion. It is, not seeking after God, and not having him in our thoughts. No inquiry after him, Job xxxv. 10. *Jer. ii. 6. no desire towards him, no communion with him, and a secret wish to have no dependance upon him, and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God, i. e. not call upon him, they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but no eye to God in any of them, no subjection to his will, nor aim at his glory.* 2. The cause of this im-



piety and irreligion; and that is pride. Men will not seek after God, because they think they have no need of him, their own hands are sufficient for them; they think it a thing below them to be religious, because religious people are few, and mean, and despised, and the restraints of religion will be a disparagement to them.

(4.) He proudly makes light of God's commandments and judgments, *ver. 5 his ways are always grievous, i. e.* He is very daring and resolute in his sinful courses, he will have his way, though never so tiresome to himself and vexatious to others; he travels with pain in his wicked courses, and yet his pride makes him wilful and obstinate in them. God's judgments, *i. e.* what he commands, and what he threatens for the breach of his commands, are *far above out of his sight*; he is not sensible of his duty, by the law of God, nor of his danger by the wrath and curse of God. Tell him of God's authority over him, he turns it off with this, he never saw God, and therefore doth not know that there is a God, he is *in the height of heaven*, and *quæ supra nos nihil ad nos*; tell him of God's judgments, which will be executed upon those that go on still in their trespasses, and will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are *far above out of his sight*, and therefore he thinks they are mere bugbears.

(5.) He proudly despiseth all his enemies, and looks upon them with the utmost disdain; he puffs at them whom God is preparing to be a scourge and ruin to him, as if he could baffle them all, and was able to make his part good with them. But as it is impolitic to despise an enemy so it is impious to despise any instrument of God's wrath.

(6.) He proudly sets trouble at defiance, and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity, *ver. 6. He hath said in his heart*, and pleased himself with the thought, *I shall not be moved*; my goods are laid up for many years, and *I shall never be in adversity*. Like Babylon, that said, *I shall be a lady for ever*, *Isa. xlvii. 7. Rev. xviii. 7.* Those are nearest ruin who thus set it furthest from them.

2. They are persecutors, cruel persecutors: for the gratifying of their pride, covetousness, and in opposition to God and religion, they are very oppressive to all within their reach. Observe, concerning these persecutors:

(1.) That they are very bitter and malicious, *ver. 7. His mouth is full of cursing*. Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized, and cursed with bell, book, and candle. Where there is a heart full of malice, there is commonly a mouth full of curses.

2. That they are very false and treacherous. There is mischief designed, but it is hid under the tongue not to be discerned, for the mouth is full of deceit and vanity; he has learned of the devil to deceive, and so to destroy: with this his hatred is covered, *Prov. xxvi. 26.* He cares not what lies he tells, nor what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he useth to compass his ends.

3. That they are very cunning and crafty in carrying on their designs. They have ways and means to concert what they intend, that they may the more effectually accomplish it. Like Esau, that cunning hunter, *he sits in the lurking places*, and his eyes are privily set to do mischief, *ver. 8.* not because he is ashamed of what he doth (if he blushed there were some hopes he would repent); not because he is afraid of the wrath of God, for he imagines God will never call him to an account, *ver. 11.* but because he is afraid, lest the discovery of his designs should be the breaking of them. Perhaps it refers particularly to robbers and highwaymen, who lie in wait for honest travellers, to make a prey of them and what they have.

4. That they are very cruel and barbarous. Their malice is against the innocent, that never provoked them; against the poor, that cannot resist them, and that it will be no glory to them to triumph over. Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honour, against whose mischievous designs neither innocence nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power ought to protect the innocent, and provide for the poor; yet he will be the destroyer of those whose guardian he ought to be. And what do they aim at? It is to *catch the poor*, and *draw them into their net*, *i. e.* get them into their power, not to strip them only, but to murder them; they hunt for the precious life. They are God's poor people that they are persecuting, against whom they bear a mortal hatred, for his sake whose they are, and whose image they bear, and therefore they lie in wait to murder them: he lies in wait as a lion that thirsts after blood, and feeds with pleasure upon the prey. The devil, whose agent he is, is compared to a roaring lion that seeks not what, but whom he may devour.

5. That they are base and hypocritical, *ver. 10. He croucheth and humbleth himself*, as beasts of prey do, that they may get their prey within their reach. This intimates that the fordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing, though never so mean, for the compassing of their wicked designs; witness the scandalous practices of Saul when he hunted David. It intimates likewise, that they cover their malicious designs with the pretence of meanness and humility, and design of kindness to those they design the greatest mischief to, they seem to humble themselves to take cognizance of the poor, and concern themselves to their concerns, when it is in order to make them fall, or make a prey of them.

6. That they are very impious and atheistical, *ver. 11.* They could not thus break through all the laws of justice and goodness towards man, if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion, and risen up in rebellion against the light of its most sacred and self-evident principles. *He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten.* When his own conscience rebuked him for his wickedness, and threatened him with the consequence of it, and asked how he would answer it to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth? He turned it off with this, *God has forsaken the earth*, *Ezek. viii. 12—ix. 9.* This is a blasphemous reproach, (1.) Upon God's omniscience and providence, as if he could not, or did not see what men do in this lower world. (2.) Upon his holiness, and the rectitude of his nature, as if though he did see, yet he did not dislike, but was willing to connive at the most unnatural and inhuman villanies. 3. Upon his justice and the equity of his government, as if though he did see and dislike the wickedness of the wicked, yet he would never reckon with them, nor punish them for it, either because he could not, or durst not, or was not inclined to it. Let those that suffer by proud oppressors, hope that God will in due time appear for them; for those that are abusive to them, are abusive to God Almighty too.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts much affected with a holy indignation at the wickedness of the oppressors, a tender compassion of the miseries of the oppressed, and a pious zeal for glory and honour of God, with a firm belief that he will in due time right the injured, and reckon with the injurious.

12. Arise, O LORD, O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble. 13. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. 14. Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest

mischievous and spite to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee, thou art the helper of the fatherless: 15. Break thou the arm of the wicked, and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none. 16. The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. 17. LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare thine heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: 18. To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

David here, upon the foregoing remembrance of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, grounds an address to God: Wherein observe,

1. What he prays for: (1.) That God would himself appear, *ver. 12. Arise O Lord, O God, lift up thine hand*; manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world, *Arise, O Lord*, to the confusion of those who say, thou hidest thy face. Manifest thy power, exert it for maintaining of thine own cause, lift up thine hand to give a fatal blow to these oppressors; let thine everlasting arm be made bare. (2.) That he would appear for his people, *forget not the humble, the afflicted*, that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit. Their oppressors in their presumption say, thou hast forgotten them; and they in their despair, are ready to say the same; Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken. (3.) That he would appear against their persecutors, *ver. 15.* (1.) That he would disable them to do any farther mischief: *Break thou the arm of the wicked*, *i. e.* take away his power, *that the hypocrite, reign not, lest the people be ensnared*, *Job xxxiv. 20.* We read of oppressors whose dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged, *Dan. vii. 12.* that they might have time to repent. (2.) That he would deal with them for the mischief they had done; seek out his wickedness; let it all be brought to light, which he thought should for ever lie undiscovered; let it all be brought to account, which he thought should for ever go unpunished, bring it out till thou find none, *i. e.* till none of his evil deeds remain unreckoned for, none of his evil designs remain undetected, and none of his partisans undefeated.

2. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions.

1. He pleads the great affronts which these proud oppressors put upon God himself: Lord, it is thine own cause we beg thou wouldst appear in, the enemies have made it so, and therefore it is not for thy glory to let them go unpunished, *ver. 13. Wherefore do the wicked contemn God?* He doth so; for he saith, *Thou wilt not require it, i. e.* Thou wilt never call them to an account for what they do; than which they could not put a greater indignity upon the righteous God. The psalmist here speaks with admiration, (1.) At the wickedness of the wicked, why do they speak so impiously, why so absurdly? It is a great trouble to good men to think what contempt is cast upon the holy God by the sin of sinners, upon his precepts, his promises, his threatenings, his favours, his judgments, all are despised and made light of. *Wherefore do the wicked thus contemn God?* It is because they do not know him. (2.) At the patience and forbearance of God towards them; why are they suffered thus to contemn God? Why doth he not presently vindicate himself, and take vengeance on them? It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full.

2. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety and iniquity of these oppressors, *ver. 14.* Do the persecutors encourage themselves with a groundless fancy, that thou wilt never see it? Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that thou hast seen it, but that thou dost behold it, even all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurks in the hearts of these oppressors, it is all known to thee, and observed by thee; nay, not only thou hast seen it, and dost behold it, but thou wilt requite it, will recompense into their bosoms, by thy just and avenging hand.

3. He pleads the dependence which the oppressed had upon him: *The poor committeth himself unto thee*, each of them doth so, poor I for one: They rely on thee as their patron and protector, they refer themselves to thee as their judge, in whose determination they acquiesce, and at whose disposal they are willing to be. They leave themselves with thee, so some read it; not preferring, but subscribing to thy wisdom and will. They thus give thee honour, as much as their oppressor dishonours thee. They are thy willing subjects and put themselves under thy protection therefore protect them.

4. He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us. (1.) As a great God, he is *King for ever and ever*, *ver. 16.* And it is the office of a king to administer justice for the restraint and terror of evil doers, and the protection and praise of them that do well. To whom should the injured subjects appeal but to the sovereign, *Help, my Lord, O King: Avenge me of mine adversary*: Lord, let all that pay homage and tribute to thee as thy king, have the benefit of thy government, and find thee their refuge. Thou art an everlasting King, which no earthly prince is, and therefore canst and wilt by an eternal judgment dispense rewards and punishments in an everlasting state, when time shall be no more; and to that judgment the poor refer themselves. (2.) As a good God; he is the helper of the fatherless, *ver. 14. i. e.* of those who have no one else to help them, and have many to injure them. He has appointed kings to defend the poor and fatherless, *Psalm lxxxi. 3.* and therefore much more will he do it himself; for he has taken it among the titles of his honour, to be a father to the fatherless, *Psalm lxxviii. 5.* a helper of the helpless.

5. He pleads the experience which God's church and people had had of God's readiness to appear for them. (1.) He had dispersed and extirpated their enemies, *ver. 16. The heathen are perished out of his land, i. e.* The remainders of the Canaanites, the seven devoted nations, which have long been as thorns in the eyes, and goads in the sides of Israel, are now at length utterly rooted out; and that is an encouragement to us to hope, that God will in like manner break the arm of the oppressive Israelites, that were in some respects worse than heathens. (2.) He had heard, and answered their prayers, *ver. 17.* Lord, thou hast many a time heard the desire of the humble, and never saidst to a distressed suppliant, seek in vain. Why may not we hope for the continuance and repetition of the wonders, the favours which our fathers told us of?

6. He pleads their expectations from God, pursuant to their experiences of him: *Thou hast heard*, therefore *thou wilt cause thine ear to hear*, as *Psalm vi. 9.* Thou art the same, and thy power and promise and relation to thy people the same; and the work and workings of grace are the same in them; and therefore why may we not hope, that he who has been, will still be, will ever be a God hearing prayer? But observe, (1.) In what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people, and then gives them an answer of peace; nor may we expect his gracious answer but in this way; so that God's working upon us, is the best ear-



nest of his working for us. He prepares the heart for prayer, by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer; he prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for, makes us fit to receive it and use it well, and then gives it in to us. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it, *Prov. xvi. 1.* and take that as a leading favour. (2.) What he will do in answer to prayer, *ver. 18.* (1.) He will plead the cause of the persecuted; will judge the fatherless and oppressed, will judge for them, clear up their innocence, restore their comforts, and recompense them for all the loss and damage they have sustained. (2.) He will put an end to the fury of the persecutors. Hitherto they shall come, but no farther; here shall the proud waves of their malice be stayed; an effectual course shall be taken that the man of the earth may no more oppress. See how light the psalmist now makes of the power of that proud persecutor, whom he had been describing in this psalm, and how slight he speaks of him, now he had been considering God's sovereignty. (1.) He is but a man of the earth, a man out of the earth, so the word is, sprung out of the earth, and therefore mean and weak, and hastening to the earth again. Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, when he is but *man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass?* *Isa. li. 12.* He that protects us is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us is but a man of the earth. (2.) God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the word, Satan shall by his instruments no more deceive, *Rev. xx. 3.* no more oppress.

In singing these verses, we must commit religion's just but injured cause to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will in due time plead it with jealousy.

P S A L M XI.

In this psalm we have David's struggle with, and triumph over, a strong temptation to distrust God, and betake himself to indirect means for his own safety in a time of danger. It is supposed to have been penned when he began to feel the resentments of Saul's envy, and had had the javelin thrown at him once and again. He was then advised to run his country; no, saith he, I trust in God, and therefore will keep my ground. Observe, (1.) How he represents his temptation, and perhaps parleys with it, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* (2.) How he answers it, and puts it to silence with the consideration of God's dominion and providence, *ver. 4.* His favour to the righteous, and the wrath which the wicked are reserved for, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* In time of public fears, when the insults of the church's enemies are daring and threatening, it will be profitable to meditate on this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **I**N the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee, as a bird to your mountain? 2. For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string: that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. 3. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Here is, 1. David's fixed resolution to make God his confidence: *In the Lord, put I my trust*, *ver. 1.* Those that truly fear God and serve him, are welcome to put their trust in him, and shall not be made ashamed of their doing so. And it is the character of the saints that have taken God for their God, they make him their hope: even when they have other things to stay themselves upon, yet they do not, they dare not, stay upon them, but on God only: gold is not their hope, nor horses and chariots their confidence, but God only: and therefore when second causes frown, yet their hopes do not fail them, because the first cause is still the same, is ever so. The psalmist, before he gives an account of the temptation he was in to distrust God, records his resolution to trust in him, as that which he was resolved to live and die by.

2. His resentment to a temptation to the contrary: *How say ye to my soul, which hath thus returned to God as its rest, and reposeth in him. Flee as a bird to your mountain*, to be safe there out of the reach of the fowler. This may be taken either,

1. As the serious advice of his timorous friends, so many understand it, and with great probability. Some that were hearty well-wishers to David, when they saw how much Saul was exasperated against him, and how maliciously he sought his life, pressed him by all means to flee for the same to some place of shelter, and not to depend too much upon the anointing he had received, which they thought was more likely to lose him his head than to save it. That which grieved him in this motion, was not that to flee now would favour of cowardice and ill become a soldier, but that it would favour of unbelief, and ill become a saint, who had so often said, *In the Lord put I my trust*. Taking it thus, the two following verses are the reason with which these saint-hearted friends of David backed this advice. They would have him flee, (1.) Because he could not be safe where he was, *ver. 2.* Look, say they, how the wicked bend their bow, Saul and his instruments aim at thy life, and the uprightness of thine heart will not be thy security. See what an enemy there is in the wicked against the upright, in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman; what pains they take, what preparations they make to do them a mischief; they privily shoot at them, or in darkness, that they may not see the evil designed to avoid it, nor others to prevent it; no, nor God himself to punish it. (2.) Because he could be no longer useful where he was; for, say they, if the foundations be destroyed, as they were by Saul's maladministration, if the civil state and government be unhinged and all out of course, *Psal. lxxv. 3—lxxii. 5.* what canst thou do with thy righteousness to redress the grievances? Alas, it is to no purpose to attempt the saving of a kingdom so wretchedly shattered, whatever the righteous can do signifies nothing: *Abi in cellam, & dic miserere mei Domini.* Many are thus hindered from doing the service they might do the public in difficult times by a despair of success.

2. It may be taken as a taunt wherewith his enemies bantered him, upbraiding him with the professions he used to make of confidence in God, and scornfully bidding him try what stead that would stand him in now. You say, God is your mountain; flee to him now, and see what the better you will be. Thus they endeavoured to shame the counsel of the poor, saying *There is no help for them in God*, *Psal. xiv. 6—iii. 2.* The confidence and comfort which the saints have in God, when all the hopes and joys in the creature fail them, is a riddle to a carnal world, and is ridiculed accordingly.

Taking it thus, the two following verses are David's answer to this sarcasm. In which, (1.) He complains of the malice of those who did thus abuse him, *ver. 2.* *They bend their bow, and make ready their arrows*; and we are told, *Psal. lxxv. 3.* what they are, even bitter words, such words as these, by which they endeavour to discourage their hope in God, which David felt as a sword in his bones. (2.) He resists the temptation with a gracious abhorrence, *ver. 3.* He looks upon the suggestions as striking at the foundations which every Israelite builds upon. If you destroy the foundations, if you take good people off from their hope in God, if you can persuade them that their religion is a cheat and a jest, and can banter them out of that, you ruin them and break their hearts indeed, and make them of all men the most miserable. The principles of religion are the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built. These were concerned in interest as well as duty, to hold fast against all temptations to infidelity; for if these be destroyed, if we let these go, *What can the righteous do?* Good people would be undone if they had not a God to go to, a God to trust to, and a future bliss to hope for.

4. The LORD is in his holy temple: the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eye-lids try, the children of men. 5. The LORD trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. 6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and in horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup. 7. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.

The shaking of a tree (they say) makes it take the deeper and faster root. The attempt of David's enemies to discourage his confidence in God, engageth him to cleave so much the closer to his first principles, and to review them, which he here doth abundantly to his own satisfaction, and the silencing of all temptations to infidelity. That which was shocking to his faith, and has been so to the faith of many, was the prosperity of wicked people in their wicked ways; and the straits and distresses which the best men are sometimes reduced to; from hence such an evil thought as this was apt to arise, *Surely it is vain to serve God*, and we may call the proud happy; but to stifle and shame all such thoughts, we are here called to consider,

1. That there is a God, a God in heaven, the Lord is in his holy temple above, where, though he is out of our sight, yet we are not out of his. Let not the enemies of the saints insult over them, as if they were at a loss and at their wits end: no, they have a God, and they know where to find him, and how to direct their prayer unto him, as their father in heaven. Or he is in his holy temple, i. e. in his church; he is a God in covenant and communion with his people, through a Mediator of whom the temple was a type. We need not say, Who shall go up to heaven to fetch us from thence a God to trust to? No, the word is high us, and God in the word; his Spirit in his saints, those living temples, and the Lord is that Spirit.

2. That this God governs the world; the Lord has not only his residence but his throne in heaven, and he has set the dominion thereof in the earth, *Job xxxviii. 33.* for having prepared his thrones in the heavens, his kingdom ruleth over all, *Psal. ciii. 17.* Hence the heavens are said to rule, *Dan. iv. 26.* Let us by faith see God on his throne, on his throne of glory, infinitely transcending the splendour and majesty of earthly princes; on his throne of government, giving law, giving motion, and giving aim to all the creatures; on his throne of judgment rendering to every man according to his works: and on his throne of grace, to which his people may come boldly for mercy and grace; and we shall see no reason to be discouraged by the pride and power of oppressors, or any of the afflictions that attend the righteous.

3. That this God perfectly knows every man's true character: *His eyes behold, his eye-lids try the children of men*; he not only sees them, but he sees through them; not only knows all they say and do, but knows what they think, what they design, and how they really stand affected, whatever they pretend. We may know what men seem to be, but he knows what they are, as the refiner knows what the value of the gold is when he has tried it. God is said to try with his eyes and his eye-lids, because he knows men, not as earthly princes know men, by report and representation, but by his own strict inspection, which cannot err or be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men we think we have tried, that God's judgment of men we are sure is according to truth.

4. That if he afflicted good people, it is for their trial, and therefore it is for their good, *ver. 5.* The Lord tries all the children of men, that he may do them justice, but he tries the righteous, that he may do them good in their latter end, *Deut. viii. 16.* Let not that therefore shake our foundations, or discourage our hope and trust in God.

5. That however persecutors and oppressors may prosper and prevail awhile, they now lie under, and will for ever perish under, the wrath of God.

(1.) He is a holy God, and therefore hate them, and cannot endure to look upon them; *the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth*; for nothing is more contrary to the rectitude and goodness of his nature. Their prosperity is so far from being an evidence of God's love, that their abuse of it doth certainly make them the objects of his hatred. He that hates nothing that he has made, yet hates those that have thus ill-made themselves. Dr. Hammond offers another reading of this verse: *The Lord trieth the righteous and the wicked*, (i. e. distinguisheth infallibly between them, which is more than we can do) and *he that loveth violence hateth his own soul*, i. e. persecutors bring certain ruin upon themselves, *Prov. viii. 36.* as follows here.

(2.) He is a righteous judge, and therefore he will punish them, *ver. 6.* Their punishment will be, (1.) Inevitable. *Upon the wicked he shall rain snares*. Here is a double metaphor to speak the unavoidableness of the punishment of wicked men. It shall be rained upon them from heaven, *Job xx. 23.* against which there is no fence, and from which there is no escape; see *Josh. x. 11.* *1 Sam. ii. 10.* It shall surprise them as a sudden shower sometimes surpriseth the traveller in a summer's day. It shall be as snares upon them, to hold them fast and keep them prisoners till the day of reckoning comes. (2.) Very terrible. It is *fire and brimstone, and horrible tempest*, which plainly alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and very fitly, for that destruction was intended for a figure of the *vengeance of eternal fire*. *Jude 7.* The fire of God's wrath fastening upon the brimstone of their own guilt, will burn certainly and furiously, will burn to the lowest hell, and to the utmost line of eternity. What a horrible tempest are the wicked hurried away in at death! What a lake of fire and brimstone must they make their bed in for ever, in the congregation of the dead and damned! That is it that is here meant; that is it that shall be the portion



tion of their cup, the heritage appointed them by the Almighty, and allotted to them, *Job* xx. 29. This is the cup of trembling which shall be put into their hands, which they must *drink the dregs of*, *Psal.* lxxv. 8. Every man has the portion of this cup assigned him. They that choose the Lord for their portion of their cup, shall have what they choose, and be for ever happy in their choice, *Psal.* xvi. 5. but they who reject his grace, shall be made to drink the cup of his fury, *Jer.* xxv. 15. *Isa.* li. 17. *Hab.* ii. 16.

6. That though honest good people may be run down and trampled upon, yet God doth and will own them, and favour them, and smile upon them, and that is the reason why God will severely reckon with persecutors and oppressors, because those whom they oppress and persecute are dear to him; so that whosoever toucheth them, *toucheth the apple of his eye*, *ver.* 7. (1.) He loves them and the work of his own grace in them. He is himself a righteous God, and therefore loves righteousness wherever he finds it, and pleads the cause of the righteous that are injured and oppressed; he delights to execute judgment for them, *Psal.* ciii. 6. We must herein be followers of God, must love righteousness as he doth, that we may keep ourselves always in his love. (2.) He looks graciously upon them; *His countenance doth behold the upright*, i. e. he is not only at peace with them, but well pleased in them, and he comforts them, and puts gladness into their hearts by letting them know that he is so. He like a tender father looks upon them with pleasure, and they like dutiful children are pleased and abundantly satisfied with his smiles. They walk in the light of the Lord.

In singing this psalm we must encourage and engage ourselves to trust in God at all times, must depend upon him to protect our innocence and make us happy, must dread his frowns as worse than death, and desire his favour as better than life.

P S A L M XII.

It is supposed that David penned this psalm in Saul's reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and impiety both in court and country, which he here complains of to God, and very feelingly, for he himself suffered by the treachery of his false friends, and the insolence of his sworn enemies. (1.) He begs help of God, because there were none among them whom he durst trust, *ver.* 1, 2. (2.) He foretells the destruction of his proud and threatening enemies, *ver.* 3, 4. (3.) He assures himself and others, that how ill soever things went now, *ver.* 8. God would preserve and secure to himself his own people, *ver.* 5, 7, and would certainly make good his promises to them, *ver.* 6. Whether this psalm was penned in Saul's reign or no, it is certainly calculated for a bad reign; and perhaps David in spirit foresaw, that some of his successors would bring things to as ill a pass as is here described, and treasured up this psalm for the use of the church then. O tempora, O mores!

To the chief musician upon Sheminith,

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **HELP, LORD;** for the godly man ceaseth: for the faithful fail from among the children of men. 2. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. 3. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things. 4. Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own: who is lord over us? 5. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise (saith the LORD) I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. 6. The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. 7. Thou shalt keep them O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. 8. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

This psalm furnisheth us with good thoughts for bad times, in which though the prudent will keep silent, *Amos* v. 13. because a man may be made an offender for a word, yet a man may comfort himself with such suitable meditations and prayers as are here got ready to our hand in such a day.

1. Let us see here what it is that makes the times so bad, and when it may be said to be so. Ask the children of this world what it is in their account makes the times bad; and they will tell you that scarcity of money, and decay of trade, and the desolation of war make the times bad; but the scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes of another nature, *2 Tim.* iii. 1. *Perilous times shall come*, for iniquity shall abound, and that is the thing David here complains of.

1. When there is a general decay of piety and honesty among men, the times are then truly bad, *ver.* 1. *When the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail.* Observe, How these two characters are here put together, the godly and the faithful. As there is no true policy, so there is no true piety without honesty. Godly men are faithful men, fast men, so they have sometimes been called; their word is as confirming as their oath, as obliging as their bond: they make conscience of being true both to God and man. They are here said to cease and fail either by death or desertion, or both. Those that were godly and faithful are taken away, and those that are left are sadly degenerated, and are not what they were; so that there are few or no good people that are Israelites indeed to be met with. Perhaps he means that there was no godly faithful men among Saul's courtiers; if he means that there were few or none in Israel, we hope he was under the same mistake that Elijah was, who thought he only was left alone, when God had seven thousand who kept their integrity, *Rom.* xi. 4. or he means there were few in comparison: there was a general decay of religion and virtue: and the times are bad, very bad, when it is so, not a man to be found that executes judgment, *Jer.* v. 1.

2. When dissimulation and flattery have corrupted and debauched all conversation, then the times are very bad, *ver.* 2. When men are generally so profligate that they make no conscience of a lie, are so spiteful as to design against their neighbours the worst of mischiefs, and yet so base as to cover the design with the most specious and plausible pretences, and professions of friendship. Thus they speak vanity, i. e. falsehood and a lie, every one to his neighbour, with flattering lips and a double heart they will kiss and kill, (as Jacob did Abner and Amasa in David's own time) smile in your face and cut your throat. This is the devil's image complete, a complication of malice and falsehood. The times are bad indeed when there

is no such thing as sincerity to be met with; when an honest man knows not who to believe, nor who to trust, nor dares put confidence in a friend, in a guide, *Mic.* vii. 5, 6. *Jer.* ix. 4, 5. Woe to those who help to make times thus perilous.

3. When the enemies of God and religion, and religious people, are impudent and daring, and threaten to run down all that is just and sacred, then the times are very bad: when proud sinners are arrived to such a pitch of impiety as to say, With our tongue will we prevail against the cause of virtue, our lips are our own, and we may say what we will, *Who is Lord over us?* either to restrain us, or to call us to an account, *ver.* 4. This speaks, (1.) A proud conceit of themselves, and confidence in themselves, as if the point were indeed gained by eating forbidden fruit, and they were as gods, independent and self-sufficient; infallible in their knowledge of good and evil, and therefore fit to be oracles; irresistible in their power, and therefore fit to be law givers, that could prevail with their tongues, and like God himself, speak, and it is done. (2.) An insolent contempt of God's dominion; as if he had no propriety in them, their lips are their own; an unjust pretension, for who made man's mouth? In whose hand is his breath, and whose air is the air he breathes in? And as if he had no authority either to command them or judge them: *Who is Lord over us?* like Pharaoh, *Exod.* ver. 2. And this is as absurd and unreasonable as the former, for He in whom we live, and move, and have our being, must needs be, by an indisputable title, Lord over us.

4. When the poor and needy are oppressed, and abused, and puffed at, then the times are very bad, this implied, *ver.* 5. where God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy; they are oppressed because they are poor, have all manner of wrong done them, purely because they are not in a capacity to right themselves. Being thus oppressed, they dare not speak for themselves, lest their defence should be made their offence; but they sigh, secretly bemoaning their calamities and pouring out their souls in sighs before God. If their oppressors be spoken to on their behalf, they puff at them, make light of their own sin, and the misery of the poor, and lay neither to heart; see *Psal.* x. 5.

5. When wickedness abounds and goes barefaced under the protection and countenance of those in authority, then the times are very bad, *ver.* 7. When the vilest men are exalted to places of trust and power, that instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice, and punishing the wicked according to their merits, patronise and protect them, give them countenance, and support their reputation by their own example; then the wicked walk on every side, they swarm in all places, and go up and down seeking to deceive and debauch, and destroy others: they are neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves; they declare their sin as Sodom, and there is none to check or controul them. Bad men are base men, the vilest of men, and they are so, though they are never so highly exalted in this world. Antiochus the illustrious, the scripture calls a vile person, *Dan.* xi. 21. But it is bad with a kingdom when such are preferred, then no marvel if wickedness grows impudent and insolent. *When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.*

2. Let us now see what good things we are here furnished with for such bad times; and what times we may yet be referred for we cannot tell. When times are thus bad, it is comfortable to think,

1. That we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. This he begins with, *ver.* 1. *Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth.* All other helps and helpers fail, even the godly and faithful, who should lend a helping hand to support the dying cause of religion, they are gone, and therefore whither shall we seek but to thee? Note, When godly faithful people cease and fail, it is time to cry, Help, Lord! The abounding of iniquity threatens a deluge. Help, Lord, help the virtuous, few seek to hold fast their integrity, and to stand in the gap, help to save thine own interest in the world from sinking. *It is time for thee, Lord, to work.*

2. That God will certainly reckon with false and proud men, and will punish and restrain their insolence. They are above the controul of men, and set them at defiance. Men cannot discover the falsehood of flatterers, nor humble the haughtiness of those that speak proud things; but the righteous God will cut off all flattering lips, that give the traitor's kiss and speak words softer than oil, when war is in the heart; he will pluck out the tongue that speaks proud things against God and religion, *ver.* 3. Some translate it as a prayer, May God cut off those false and spiteful lips, *Let lying lips be put to silence.*

3. That God will in due time work deliverance for his oppressed people, and shelter them from the malicious designs of their persecutors, *ver.* 5. *Now will I arise saith the Lord.* This promise of God, which David here delivered by the spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the spirit of prayer. Help, Lord, saith he; I will, saith God: Here I am, with seasonable help and effectual help. (1.) It is seasonable now, in the fittest time. (1.) When the oppressors are in the height of their pride and insolence, when they say, *Who is Lord over us?* then is God's time to let them know to their cost that he is above them. (2.) When the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency; when they are sighing like Israel in Egypt by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God's time to appear for them, as for Israel when they were most dejected, and Pharaoh was most elevated. *Now will I arise.* Note, There is a time fixed for the rescue of oppressed innocency; that time will come, and we may be sure it is of all other the fittest time, *Psal.* cii. 13. (2.) It is effectual, *I will set him in safety*, or, in salvation; not only protect him, but restore him to his former prosperity, will bring him out into a wealthy place, *Psal.* lxxvi. 12. So that upon the whole matter he shall lose nothing by his sufferings.

4. That though men are false, God is faithful, though they are not to be trusted, God is. They speak vanity and flattery, but the words of the Lord are pure words, *ver.* 6. not only all true, but all pure, like silver tried in a furnace of earth or crucible. It notes, (1.) The sincerity of God's word, every thing is really as it is there represented, and not otherwise; it doth not jest with us, or impose upon us, nor has it any other design upon us but our own good. (2.) The preciousness of God's word; it is of great intrinsic value, like silver refined to the highest degree; it had nothing in it to depreciate it. (3.) The many proofs that have been given of its power and truth; it has been often tried, all the saints in all ages have trusted it, and so tried it, and it never deceived them or frustrates their expectation; but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, with an *experta crede*, they have found it so. Probably this refers especially to these promises of succouring and relieving the poor and oppressed. Their friends put them in hopes they will do something for them, and yet prove a broken reed: but the words of God are what we may rely upon; and the less confidence is to be put in men's words, let us with the more assurance trust in God's word.

5. That God must secure his chosen remnant to himself, how bad soever the times are, *ver.* 7. *Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.* This intimates that as long as the world stands, there will be a generation of proud and wicked men in it, more or less, who will be in danger by their wretched arts of ruining religion, by wearing out the saints of the most High, *Dan.*



Dan. vii. 25. But let God alone to maintain his own interest, and to preserve his own people. He will keep them from this generation, i. e. (1.) From being debauched by them, and drawn away from God, from mingling with them and learning their works; in times of general apostasy the Lord knows them that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity. (2.) From being destroyed and rooted out by them; the church is built upon a rock, and so well fortified that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the worst of times God has his remnant, and in every age will reserve to himself a holy seed, and preserve that to his heavenly kingdom.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, we must bewail the general corruption of manners, thank God that things are not worse than they are, but pray and hope that they will be better in God's due time.

PSALM XIII.

*This psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. Whether it was penned upon any particular occasion doth not appear, but in general, (1.) David sadly complains, that God had long withdrawn from him, and delayed to relieve him, ver. 1. 2. (2.) He earnestly prays to God to consider his case and comfort him, ver. 3. 4. (3.) He assures himself of an answer of peace, and therefore concludes this Psalm with joy and triumph, because he concludes his deliverance as good as wrought, ver. 5, 6.*

¶ To the chief musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **H**OW long wilt thou forget me, O LORD, for ever, how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? 2. How long shall I take council in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? 3. consider and hear me, O LORD my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death; 4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me, rejoice when I am moved. 5. But I have trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. 6. I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

David in affliction is here pouring out his soul before God, his address is short, but the method is very observable, and of use for direction and encouragement.

1. His troubles extort complaints, ver. 1, 2. and the afflicted have liberty to pour out their complaint to the Lord, Psalm cii. title. It is some ease to a troubled spirit to give vent to his griefs, especially to give vent to them at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find one who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people, and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have freedom of speech (*παρρησία*). Observe here.

1. What it is that David complains of. Three things.

(1.) God's unkindness, so he construed it, and it was his infirmity. He thought God had forgotten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, his former loving-kindness which he had shewed him, and which he took to be an earnest of further mercy; had forgotten that there was such a man in the world, who needed and expected relief and succour from him. Thus Sion said, *My God has forgotten me*, Isa. xlix. 14. Israel said, *My way is hid from the Lord*, Isa. xl. 27. Not that any good man can doubt the omniscience, and goodness, and faithfulness of God; but it is a peevish expression of prevailing fear, which yet when it ariseth from a high esteem and earnest desire of God's favour, though it be indecent and culpable, shall be passed by and pardoned, for the second thought will retract it and repent of it. God hid his face from him, i. e. he wanted that inward comfort in God which he used to have, and herein was a type of Christ upon the cross, crying out *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* God sometimes hides his face from his own children, and leaves them in the dark concerning their interest in him; and this they lay more to heart than any outward trouble whatsoever.

(2.) His own uneasiness. (1.) He was racked with care that filled his head; *I take counsel in my soul*, i. e. I am at a loss, and am *inops consilii*, have no friend to advise with that I can put any confidence in, and therefore am myself continually projecting what to do to help myself, but none of my projects are likely to take effect; so that I am at my wit's end, and in a continual toils. Anxious cares are heavy burdens with which many times good people load themselves more than they need. (2.) He was overwhelmed with sorrow that filled his heart. *I have sorrow in my heart daily*. He had a constant disposition to sorrow, and it preyed upon his spirits; not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but by day too, when lighter griefs are diverted and dissipated by conversation and business; nay, every day brought with it fresh occasions of grief; *The clouds returned after the rain*. The bread of sorrow is sometimes the saints daily bread; our Master himself was a man of sorrows.

(3.) His enemies insolence, which added to his grief. Saul, his great enemy, and others under him, were exalted over him, triumphed in his distress, pleased themselves with his grief, and promised themselves a complete victory over him. This he complained of as reflecting dishonour upon God, and his power and promise.

2. How he expostulates with God hereupon. How long shall it be thus? And shall it be thus for ever? Long afflictions try our patience, and often tire it. And it is a common temptation when trouble lasts long to think it will last always, and then despondency turns into despair, and those that have long been without joy, begin at last to be without hope; Lord tell me how long thou wilt hide thy face, and assure me that it shall not be for ever; but that thou wilt return at length in mercy to me, and then I shall the easier bear my present troubles.

3. His complaints stir up his prayers, ver. 3, 4. We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what are fit to be offered up to God, and what drives us to our knees. Observe here.

(1.) What his petitions are. Consider my case, hear my complaints, and lighten mine eyes, i. e. (1.) Strengthen my faith; for faith is the eye of the soul with which it sees above, and sees through the things of sense. Lord enable me to look beyond my present troubles, and to foresee a happy issue of them. (2.) Guide my way, enable me to look about me, that I may avoid the snares which are laid for me. (3.) Refresh my soul with the joy of thy salvation. That which revives the drooping spirits is

said to enlighten the eyes. 1. Sam. xiv. 37. Ezra ix. 8. Lord, scatter the cloud of melancholy which darkens my eyes, and let my countenance be made pleasant.

(2.) What his pleas are. He mentions his relation to God and interest in him, *O Lord my God*, and insists upon the greatness of the peril, which called for speedy relief and succour; if his eyes were not lightened quickly, (1.) He concludes that he must perish. *I shall sleep the sleep of death*, I cannot live under the weight of all this care and grief. Nothing more killing to a soul, than the want of God's favour, nothing more reviving than the return of it. (2.) That then his enemies would triumph, *lest mine enemy say*, so would I have it; lest Saul, lest Satan be gratified in my fall. It would gratify the pride of his enemy, he will say, I have prevailed, I have gotten the day, and been too hard for him and his God; it will gratify the malice of his enemies, they will rejoice when I am moved. And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth!

3. His prayers are soon turned into praises, ver. 5, 6. *But my heart shall rejoice, and I will sing to the Lord*. What a surprising change is here in a few lines! In the beginning of the psalm we have him drooping and trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our countenance be no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18. And here observe the method of his comfort.

1. God's mercy is the support of his faith. My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable, till I consider the infinite goodness of God, and finding I have that to trust to, I am well enough, though I have no merit of my own. In former distresses I have trusted in the mercy of God, and I never found that it failed me; his mercy has in due time relieved me, and my confidence in it has in the mean time supported me. Even in the depth of this distress, when God has hid his face from me, when without were fightings, and within were fears, yet I trusted in the mercy of God, and that was an anchor in a storm, by the help of which, though I was tossed, I was not overset. And still I do trust in thy mercy, so some read it. I refer myself to that with an assurance that it would do well for me at last. This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that hope in his mercy, Psalm cxviii. 11.

2. His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with joy in salvation; for joy and peace come by believing, Rom. xv. 13. *Believing ye rejoice*, 1 Pet. i. 8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should rejoice in thy salvation. Though weeping endure long, joy will return.

3. His joy in God's salvation would fill his mouth with songs of praise, ver. 6. *I will sing unto the Lord*; sing in the remembrance of what he has done formerly, though I should never recover the peace I have had, I will die blessing God that ever I had it; he has dealt bountifully with me formerly, and he shall have the glory of that however he is pleased to deal with me now. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me at last; being confident that all will end well, will end everlastingly well. But he speaks of it as a thing past, *he has dealt bountifully with me*, because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation, and he was as confident of it as if it had been done already.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, if we have not the same complaints to make that David had, we must thank God that we have not, dread and deprecate his withdrawals, pity and sympathize with those that are troubled in mind, and encourage ourselves in our most holy faith and joy.

PSALM XIV.

*It doth not appear upon what occasion this psalm was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion. Some say David penned it when Saul persecuted him; others when Absalom rebelled against him. But they are mere conjectures, which have not certainly enough to warrant us to expound the psalm by them. The Apostle in quoting part of this psalm, Rom. iii. 10, &c. to prove that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, ver. 9. and all the world is guilty before God, ver. 19. leads us to understand it in general as a description of the depravity of human nature, and the sinfulness of the sin we are conceived and born in; and the deplorable corruption of a great part of mankind, even of the world that lies in wickedness, 1 John v. 19. But as in those psalms which are designed to discover our remedy in Christ, there is commonly an allusion to David himself, yea, and some passages that are to be understood primarily of him, as in Psalm ii. xvi. xxii. and others; so in this psalm which is designed to discover our wound by sin; there is an allusion to David's enemies and persecutors, and other the oppressors of good men at that time, to whom some passages have an immediate reference. In all the psalms from the 1st to this (except the 118th) David had been complaining of those that hated and persecuted him, insulted him, and abused him; now he here runs up all those bitter streams to the fountain, the general corruption of nature, and sees they were not his enemies only, but all the children of men that were thus corrupted. Here is (1.) A charge exhibited against a wicked world, ver. 1. (2.) The proof of the charge, ver. 2, 3. (3.) A serious expostulation with sinners, especially with persecutors, upon it, ver. 4, 5, 6. (4.) A believing prayer for the salvation of Israel, and a joyful expectation of it, ver. 7.*

¶ To the chief musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **T**HE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God: they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good. 2. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. 3. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one.

If we apply our hearts as Solomon did, Eccl. vii. 26. to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness, these verses will assist us in the search, and will show us sin exceedingly sinful. Sin is the disease of mankind, and it appears here to be malignant and epidemical.

1. See how malignant it is, ver. 1. in two things.

(1.) The contempt it puts upon the honour of God; for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin. *The fool hath said in his heart*,



*heart, There is no God.* We are sometimes tempted to think, sure there never was so much atheism and profaneness as there is in our days; but we see the former days were no better, even in David's time there were those who had arrived at such a height of impiety, as to deny the very being of a God, and the first and self-evident principles of religion. Observe, 1. The sinner here described. He is one that *saith in his heart, There is no God*; he is an atheist. There is no Elohim, no judge or governor of the world, no providence presiding over the affairs of men. They cannot doubt of the being of God, but will question his dominion. He saith this *in his heart*; it is not his judgment but his imagination. He cannot think there is none, but he wisheth there were none, and pleaseth himself with the fancy that it is possible there may be none, he cannot be sure there is one, and therefore he is willing to think there is none. He dares not speak it out, lest he be confuted, and so undeceived, but he whispers it secretly *in his heart*, for the silencing of the clamours of his conscience, and the emboldening of himself in his evil ways. 2. The character of this sinner. He is a fool, he is simple and unwise; and this is an evidence of it; he is wicked and profane, and this is the cause of it. Note, Atheistical thoughts are very foolish wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world. The word of God is a *diserner of these thoughts*, and puts a just brand on him that harbours them, *Nabal is his name, and folly is with him*; for he thinks against the clearest light, against his own knowledge and convictions, and the common sentiments of all the wise and sober part of mankind; and there is no man will say, *There is no God*, till he is so hardened in sin, that it is become his interest there should be no one to call him to an account.

(2.) The disgrace and debasement it puts upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degenerated from what man was in his innocent estate; *They are become filthy*, ver. 3. putrid and stinking. All their faculties are so disordered, that they are become odious to their Maker, and utterly incapable to answer the ends of their creation. Corrupt indeed: for, 1. They do no good, but are the unprofitable burdens of the earth; they do God no service, bring him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness. 2. They do a great deal of hurt; they have *done abominable works*, for such all sinful works are; sin is an abomination to God, it is that *abominable thing which he hates*, Jer. xlv. 4. and sooner or later it will be so to the sinner, it will be *found to be hateful*, Psal. xxxvi. 2. an *abomination of desolation*, i. e. making desolate, Matt. xxiv. 15. This follows upon their saying, *There is no God*; for they that *profess they know God, but in works deny him, are abominable, and to every good work reprobate*, Tit. i. 16.

2. See how epidemical this disease is, it has infected the whole race of mankind. To prove this, God himself is here brought in for a witness, and he is: *n eye-witness*, ver. 2, 3. Observe, (1.) His inquiry, *The Lord looked down from heaven*, a place of prospect which commands this lower world; from whence with an all-seeing eye he took a view of all the children of men, and the question was, *Whether there were any among them that did understand themselves aright, their duty and interests, and did seek God and set him before them.* He that made this search was not only one that could find out a good man if he was to be found, though never so obscure; but one that would be glad to find out one, and would be sure to take notice of him as of Noah in the old world. (2.) The result of this inquiry, ver. 3. Upon search, upon his search, it appeared, *They are all gone aside*, the apostacy is universal, *there is none that doth good, no not one.* Till the free and mighty grace of God has wrought a change, whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, is not of themselves, it is God's work in them. When God made the world, he looked upon his own work, and *all was very good*, Gen. i. 31. but some time after he looked upon man's work, and behold, all was very bad, Gen. vi. 5. every operation of the thought of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually. They are gone aside from the right way of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and are turned into the paths of the destroyer. In singing this let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God; and since that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told, we must be born again.

4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as they eat bread*, and call not upon the LORD. 5. There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous. 6. Ye have flamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge. 7. O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

In these verses the psalmist endeavours,

1. To convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure forever they are in that way. Three things he shews them, which it may be they are not very willing to see, their wickedness, their folly, and their danger, while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and good, and safe. See here, (1.) Their wickedness; this is described in four instances. (1.) They are themselves workers of iniquity; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business. (2.) They eat up God's people with as much greediness as they eat bread; such an innate and inveterate enmity they have to them, and so heartily do they desire their ruin, because they really hate God whose people they are. It is meat and drink to persecutors to be doing mischief; it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They eat up God's people easily, daily, securely, without either check of conscience when they do it, or remorse of conscience when they have done it: as Joseph's brethren *cast him into a pit*, and then *sat down to eat bread*, Gen. xxxvii. 24, 25. See *Mic. iii. 2, 3.* (3.) They called not upon the Lord. Note, Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of him. And the reason why people run into all manner of wickedness, even the worst, is, because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer? (4.) They *shame the counsel of the poor*, and upbraid them with making God their refuge, as David's enemies upbraided him, *Psalm ix. 1.* Note, Those are very wicked indeed, and have a great deal to answer for, who not only shake off religion, and live without it themselves, but say and do what they can to put others out of conceit with it that are well inclined; with the duties of it, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable; and with the privileges of it, as if they were insufficient to make a man safe and happy. Those that banter religion and religious people, will find to their cost it is ill-jesting with edged tools, and dangerous persecuting those that make God their refuge. *Be ye not mockers, lest your hands be made strong.* He shews them, (2.) Their folly: they have no knowledge, so it is a sign; for if they had any knowledge of God, if they did rightly understand themselves, and would but consider things as men,

they would not be so abusive and barbarous as they are to the people of God. (3.) Their danger, ver. 5. *There were they in great fear.* There, where they eat up God's people, their own consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors: they sweetly sucked the blood of the saints, but in their bowels it is turned, and become the gall of asps. Many instances there have been of proud and cruel persecutors, who have been made like Passur, *Magor-missabib*, terrors to themselves and all about them. They that will not fear God, perhaps may be made to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

2. He endeavours to comfort the people of God, (1.) With what they have: they have God's presence, ver. 5. *He is the generation of the righteous*: they have his protection, ver. 6. *The Lord is their refuge.* This is as much their security, as it is the terror of their enemies, who may jeer them from their confidence in God, but cannot jeer them out of it. In the judgment day it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners to see God own the generation of the righteous, which they have hated and bantered. (2.) With what they hope for: and that is the *salvation of Israel*, ver. 7. When David was driven out by Absalom and his rebellious accomplices, he comforted himself with an assurance, that God would in due time *turn again his captivity* to the joy of all his good subjects. But surely this pleasing prospect looks further. He had in the beginning of the psalm lamented the general corruption of mankind; and in the melancholy view of that, wishes for the salvation, which in that fulness of time was to come out of Zion, salvation from sin, that great salvation which would be wrought out by the Redeemer, who was expected to *come to Zion*, to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, Rom. xi. 26. The world is bad, O that the Messiah would come and mend them! there is an universal corruption, O for the time of reformation! those will be as joyful times as these are melancholy ones. Then shall God *turn again the captivity of his people*; for the Redeemer shall *ascend up on high*, and *lead captivity captive*, and Jacob shall in that rejoice. The triumphs of Zion's king will be the joys of Zion's children. The second coming of Christ, finally to distinguish the dominion of sin and Satan, will be the completing of this salvation, which is the hope, and will be the joy of every Israelite indeed: and with the assurance of that we should in singing this comfort ourselves and one another, with reference to the present sins of sinners and sufferings of saints.

P S A L M XV.

The scope of this short but excellent psalm is, to shew us the way to heaven, and to convince us, that if we would be happy we must be holy and honest. Christ, who is himself the way, and in whom we must walk as our way, has also shewed us the same way that is here prescribed, Matth. xix. 17. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. In this psalm, (1.) By the question, ver. 1. we are directed and excited to inquire the way. (2.) By the answer to that question in the rest of the psalm, we are directed to walk, ver. 2, 3, 4, 5. (3.) By the assurance given in the close of the psalm, of the safety and happiness of those who answer these characters, we are encouraged to walk in that way, ver. 5.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? 2. He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. 3. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour. 4. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. 5. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doth these things shall never be moved.

Here is, 1. A very serious and weighty question concerning the characters of a citizen of Zion, ver. 1. *Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle?* i. e. Let me know who shall go to heaven? Not, who by name, so the Lord only knows them that are his; but who by description: what kind of people are they whom thou wilt own, and crown with distinguishing and everlasting favours; This supposeth that it is a great privilege to be a citizen of Zion, an unspeakable honour and advantage: that all are not thus privileged, but a remnant only; and that men are not intitled to this privilege by their birth and blood; all shall not *abide in God's tabernacle* that have Abraham to their father, but according as men's hearts and lives are, accordingly will their lot be. It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves, *Lord, what shall I be and do, that I may abide in thy tabernacle?* Luke xviii. 18. Acts xvi. 30.

1. Observe, Who this inquiry is addressed to: to God himself. Note, Those that would find the way to heaven, must look up to God, must take direction from his word, and beg direction from his Spirit. It is fit he himself should give laws to his servants, and appoint the conditions of his favours, and tell who are his, and who are not.

2. How it is expressed in Old Testament language. (1.) By the tabernacle we may understand the church militant, typified by Moses's tabernacle, fitted to a wilderness state, mean and movable. There God manifests himself, and there he meets his people, as of old in the tabernacle of the testimony, the tabernacle of meeting. Who shall dwell in this tabernacle, i. e. who shall be accounted a true living member of God's church, admitted among the spiritual priests to lodge in the courts of this tabernacle? We are concerned to inquire this, because many pretend to a place in this tabernacle, who really have no part or lot in the matter. (2.) By the holy hill we may understand the church triumphant, alluding to mount Zion, on which the temple was to be built by Solomon. It is the happiness of glorified saints, that they dwell in that holy hill, they are at home there, they shall be for ever there. It concerns us to know who shall dwell there, that we make it sure to ourselves that we shall have a place among them, and may then take the comfort of it, and rejoice in prospect of that holy hill.

2. A very plain and particular answer to this question. Those that desire to know their duty, with a resolution to do it, will find the scripture a very faithful director, and conscience a faithful monitor. Let us see then the particular characters of a citizen of Zion.

1. He is one that is sincere and entire in his religion. *He walketh uprightly*, according to the condition of the covenant, Gen. xvii. 1. *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*, (it is the same word that is here used) and then thou shalt find me a God all sufficient. He is really what he professeth to be,



he, is found at heart; and can approve himself to God in his integrity in all he doth; his conversation is uniform, and he is of a piece with himself, and endeavours to stand complete in all the will of God. His eye perhaps is weak, but it is single; he has his spots indeed, but he doth not paint; an *Israelite indeed in whom is no guile*, John i. 47. 2 Cor. i. 12. I know no religion but sincerity.

2. He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do. He *worketh righteousness*, i. e. he walks in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and takes care to give all their due; is just both to God and man; and in speaking to both, he speaketh that which is *the truth in his heart*; his prayers, professions, and promises to God come not out of feigned lips, nor dares he tell a lie, or so much as equivocate in his converse or commerce with men. He walks by the rules of righteousness and truth, and scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud; and reckons that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie; and that he who wrongs his neighbour, though never so plausibly, will prove in the end to have done the greatest injury to himself.

3. He is one that contrives to do all the good he can to his neighbours, but is very careful to do hurt to no man, and is in a particular manner tender of his neighbour's reputation, *ver. 3.* He doth no evil at all to his neighbour willingly or designedly, nothing to offend or grieve his spirit, nothing to prejudice the health or ease of his body, nothing to injure him in his estate or secular interests, in his family or relations; but walks by that golden rule of equity, to do as he would be done by. He is especially careful not to injure his neighbour in his good name, because many who would not otherwise wrong their neighbours, make nothing of that; and he that in this manner bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain. He knows the worth of a good name, and therefore he backbiteth not, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not others faults the subject of his common talk, much less of his sport and ridicule, nor speaks of them with pleasure, nor at all but for edification; he makes the best of every body, and the worst of nobody. He doth not take up a reproach, i. e. he neither raileth it nor receives it; he gives no credit nor countenance to a calumny, but frowns upon a backbiting tongue, and so silenceth it, *Prov. xxv. 23.* If an ill natured character of his neighbour be given him, or an ill natured story be told him, he will disprove it if he can; if not, it shall die with him and go no further. His charity will *cover a multitude of sins*.

4. He is one that values men by their virtue and piety, and not by the figure they make in the world, *ver. 5.* (1.) He thinks the better of no man's wickedness for his pomp and grandeur. *In his eyes a vile person is contemned.* Wicked people are vile people, worthless and good for nothing. So the word signifies, as dross, as chaff, and as salt that hath lost its flavour, they are vile in their choices, *Ser. ii. 13.* in their practices, *Isa. xxxii. 6.* And for this vice and good men condemn them, not denying them civil honour and respect as men, as men in authority and power perhaps, *1 Pet. ii. 17. Rom. xiii. 7.* but in their judgment of them, agreeing with the word of God. They are so far from envying them, that they pity them, despise their gains, *Isa. xxxiii. 15.* as turning to no account; their dainties, *Psal. cxli. 4.* their pleasures, *Heb. xi. 24, 25.* as senseless and insipid. They despise their society, *Psal. cxix. 115.* 2 Kings iii. 14. despise their taunts and threats, and are not moved by him, nor disturbed at them; they despise the feeble efforts of their impotent malice, *Psal. ii. 1—4.* and will shortly triumph in their fall, *Psal. lii. 6, 7.* God despiseth them, and they are of his mind. (2.) He thinks the worse of no man's piety for his poverty and meanness, *but he knows them that fear the Lord.* He reckons that serious piety, wherever it is found, puts an honour upon a man, and makes his face to shine more than wealth or wit, or a great name among men doth or can. He honours such, i. e. he esteems them very highly in love, desires their friendship and conversation, and an interest in their prayers, is glad of an opportunity to shew them respect, or do them a good office, pleads their cause, and speaks of them with veneration, rejoiceth when they prosper, grieves when they are removed, and their memory when they are gone is precious with him. By this we may judge of ourselves in some measure: What rules do we go by in judging of others?

5. He is one that always prefers a good conscience before any secular interest or advantage whatsoever; for if he hath promised upon oath to do any thing, though afterwards it appear much to his damage or prejudice in his worldly estate, yet he sticks to it, and changeth not, *ver. 4.* See how weak-sighted and short-sighted even wise and good men may be, they may swear to their own hurt, which they were not aware of when they took the oath; but see how strong the obligation of an oath is, that a man must rather suffer loss to himself and his family, than wrong his neighbour by breaking his oath. An oath is a sacred thing, which we must not think to play fast and loose with.

6. He is one that will not increase his estate by any unjust practices, *ver. 5.* (1.) Not by extortion. *He putteth not out his money to usury,* that he may live at ease on the labours of others, while he is in capacity of improving it by his own industry. Not that it is any breach of the law of justice or charity for the lender to share in the profit which the borrower makes of his money, any more than for the owner of the land to demand rent from the occupant, money being by art and labour as improveable as land. But a citizen of Zion will freely lend to the poor, according to his ability, and not be rigorous and severe in recovering his right from those that are reduced by providence. (2.) Not by bribery. He will not take a reward against the innocent, i. e. if he be any way employed in the administration of public justice, he will not for any gain or hope of it to himself, do any thing to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

3. The psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion: He is like Zion-hill itself, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever, *Psal. cxxv. 1.* Every true living member of the church, like the church itself, is built upon a rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against. *He that doth these things shall never be moved;* shall not be moved for ever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him, to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom; temptations shall not overcome him, troubles shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace, or his future bliss.

In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to answer the character here given of the citizen of Zion, that we may never be moved from God's tabernacle on earth, and may arrive at last at that holy hill, where we shall be for ever out of the reach of temptation and danger.

## P S A L M XVI.

*This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ. It begins with such expressions of devotion, as may be applied to Christ; but concludes with such confidence of a resurrection (and so timely a one as to prevent corruption) as must be applied to Christ, to him only, and cannot be understood of David, as both St. Peter and St. Paul*  
Vol. II. No. LXXIX.

have observed, Acts ii. 24.—xiii. 36. For David died, and was buried, and saw corruption. 1. David speaks of himself as a member of Christ, and so he speaks the language of all good christians, professing his confidence in God, *ver. 1.* His consent to him, *ver. 2.* His affection to the people of God, *ver. 3.* His adherence to the true worship of God, *ver. 4.* And his entire complacency and satisfaction in God, and the interest he had in him, *ver. 5, 6, 7.* 2. He speaks of himself as a type of Christ, and so he speaks the language of Christ himself, to whom all the rest of the psalm is expressly and at large applied, Acts ii. 25, &c. David speaketh concerning him (not concerning himself) I foretold the Lord always before my face, &c. And this he spake being a prophet, *ver. 30, 31.* Spake (1.) Of the special presence of God with the Redeemer, in his services and sufferings, *ver. 8.* (2.) Of the prospect which the Redeemer had of his own resurrection, and the glory that should follow, which carried him cheerfully through his undertakings, *ver. 9, 10, 11.*

### ¶ MIGHTAM OF DAVID.

1. **P**RESERVE me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. 2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee: 3. But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight. 4. Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. 5. The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. 6. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. 7. I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night-seasons.

This psalm is intitled Mightam, which some translate a golden psalm, a very precious one, more to be valued by us than gold, yea than much fine gold; because it speaks so plainly of Christ and his resurrection, who is the true treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament.

1. David here lies to God's protection with a cheerful believing confidence in it, *ver. 1.* Preserve me, O God, from the deaths, and especially from the sins to which I am continually exposed; for in thee, and in thee only, do I put my trust. Those that by faith commit themselves to the divine care, and submit themselves to the divine conduct, have reason to hope for the benefit of both. This is applicable to Christ, who prayed, *Father, save me from this hour,* and trusted in God that he would deliver him.

2. He recogniseth his solemn dedication of himself to God, as his God, *ver. 2.* O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, and therefore thou mayest venture to trust him. Note, 1. It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acknowledge the Lord for our Lord, to subject ourselves to him, and then to stay ourselves upon him. Adonai signifies my sayer, the strength of my heart. 2. This must be done with our souls. O my soul, thou hast said it. Covenanting with God must be heart-work, all that is within us must be employed therein and engaged thereby. 3. Those who have avouched the Lord for their Lord, should be often putting themselves in mind of what they have done. Hast thou said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord? say it again then, stand to it, abide by it, and never unlay it. Hast thou said it? Take the comfort of it, and live up to it. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, and let thine eye be ever towards him.

3. He devotes himself to the honour of God, in the service of the saints, *ver. 3.* My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints. Observe, (1.) Those that have taken the Lord for their Lord, must like him be good, and do good, we do not expect happiness without goodness. (2.) Whatever good there is in us or is done by us, we must humbly acknowledge that it extendeth not to God; so that we cannot pretend to merit any thing by it. God has no need of our services, he is not benefited by them, nor can they add any thing to his infinite protection and blessedness. The wisest, and best, and most useful men in the world cannot be profitable to God, *Job xxii. 2—xxxv. 8.* God is infinitely above us, and happy without us, and whatever good we do, it is all from him; so that we are indebted to him, not he to us: David owns it, *1 Chron. xxix. 14.* Of thine own have we given thee. (3.) If God be ours, we must for his sake extend our goodness to those that are his, to be saints in the earth; for what is done to them, he is pleased to take as done to himself, having constituted them his receivers. Note, (1.) There are saints in the earth, and saints on earth we must all be, or we shall never be saints in heaven. Those that are renewed by the grace of God, and devoted to the glory of God, are saints on earth. (2.) The saints in the earth are excellent ones, great, mighty, magnificent ones; and yet some of them so poor in the world, that they needed to have David's goodness extended to them. God makes them excellent by the grace he gives them. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,* and then he accounts them excellent; they are precious in his sight and honourable, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure. Their God is their glory, and a crown of beauty to them. (3.) All that have taken the Lord for their God, delight in his saints as excellent ones, because they bear his image, and because he loves them. David, though a king, was a companion for all that feared God, *Psal. cxix. 65.* even the meanest, which was a sign that his delight was in them. (4.) It is not enough for us to delight in the saints, but as there is occasion, our goodness must extend to them; we must be ready to shew them the kindness they need, distribute to their necessities, and abound in the labour of love to them. This is applicable to Christ. The salvation he wrought out for us was no gain to God, for our ruin would have been no loss to him; but the goodness and benefit of it extends to us men, in whom he delighted, *Prov. viii. 31.* For their sakes, saith he, I sanctify myself, *John xvii. 19.* Christ delights even in the saints on earth, notwithstanding their weaknesses and manifold infirmities, which is a good reason why we should.

4. He disclaims the worship of all false gods, and all communion with their worshippers, *ver. 4.* Where, (1.) He reads the doom of idolaters, who hasten after another god, being mad upon their idols, and pursuing them as eagerly as if they were afraid they would overgo them; their sorrows shall be multiplied, both by the judgments they bring upon themselves from the true God whom they forsake, and by the disappointment they will meet with in the false gods they embrace. They that multiply gods, multiply griefs to themselves, for whosoever thinks one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough. (2.) He declares his resolution to have no fellowship with them, nor with their unfruitful works



of darkness. *Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer*, not only because the gods they are offered to are a lie, but because the offerings themselves are barbarous; At God's altar, because the blood made atonement, the drinking of it was most strictly prohibited, and the drink offerings were of wine; but the devil preferred to his worshippers to drink the blood of the sacrifices, to teach them cruelty. I will have nothing to do (saith David) with those bloody deities, nor so much as take their names into my lips with any delight in them, or respect to them. Thus must we hate idols and idolatry with a perfect hatred. Some make this also applicable to Christ and his undertaking, shewing the nature of the sacrifice he offered, it was not the blood of bulls and goats, which was offered according to the law; but was never named, nor did he ever make any mention of it, but his own blood: shewing also the multiplied sorrows of the unbelieving Jews, who hastened after another king, Caesar, and are still hastening after another Messiah, whom they in vain look for.

5. He repeats the solemn choice he had made of God for his portion and happiness *ver. 5.* takes to himself the comfort of the choice *ver. 6.* and gives God the glory of it, *ver. 7.* This is very much the language of a devout and pious soul in its gracious exercises.

1. Choosing the Lord for his portion and happiness; the most of men take the world for their chief good, and place their felicity in the enjoyments of it; but I say, *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup.* The portion I make choice of, and will gladly take up with, how poor soever my condition is in this world; let me have the love and favour of God, and be accepted of him, let me have the comfort of communion with God, and satisfaction in the communications of his graces and comforts. Let me have an interest in his promises, and a title by promise to everlasting life and happiness in the future state, and I have enough, I need no more, I desire no more to complete my felicity. Would we do well and wisely for ourselves, we must take God in Christ to be, (1.) The portion of our inheritance in the other world; heaven is an inheritance, God himself is the inheritance of the saints there, whose everlasting bliss it is to enjoy him. We must take that for our inheritance, our home, our rest, our lasting, everlasting good, and look upon this world to be no more ours, than the country is through which our road lies when we are in a journey. (2.) The portion of our cup in this world, with which I am nourished and refreshed, and kept from fainting. Those have not God for theirs, who do not reckon his comforts the most reviving cordials, acquaint themselves with them, and make use of them as sufficient to balance all the grievances of this present time, and to sweeten the most bitter cup of affliction.

Confiding in him for the security of this portion. *Thou maintainest my lot.* Thou hast by promise made thyself over to me to be mine, will graciously make good what thou hast promised, and never leave me to myself to forfeit this happiness, nor leave it in the power of mine enemies to rob me of it. Nothing shall pluck me out of thy hands, nor separate me from thy love and the sure mercies of David. The saints and their bliss are kept by the power of God.

3. Rejoicing in this portion, and taking a complacency in it, *ver. 6.* *The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places;* those have reason to say so that have God for their portion, they have a worthy portion, a goodly heritage. What can they have better? What can they desire more? *Return unto thy rest, O my soul,* and look no farther. Note, gracious souls, though they still covet more of God, never covet more than God; but being satisfied of his loving-kindness, are abundantly satisfied with it, and envy not any their carnal mirth and sensual pleasures and delights, but account themselves truly happy in what they have, and doubt not but to be completely happy in what they hope for. Those whose lot is cast, as David's was, in a land of light, in a valley of vision, where God is known and worshipped, have upon that account reason to say, the lines have fallen to them in pleasant places, much more they that have not only the means, but the end, not only Immanuel's land, but Immanuel's love.

4. Giving thanks to God for it, and for grace to make this wise and happy choice, *ver. 7.* *I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel,* this counsel, to take him for my portion and happiness. So ignorant and foolish are we, that if we be left to ourselves, our hearts will follow our eyes, and we shall choose our own delusions, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities; and therefore if we have indeed taken God for our portion, and preferred spiritual and eternal blessings before those that are sensible and temporal, we must thankfully acknowledge the power and goodness of divine grace, directing and enabling us to make that choice. If we have the pleasure of it, let God have the praise of it.

5. Making a good use of it. God having given him counsel by his word and spirit, his own reins, *i. e.* his own thoughts also, instructed him in the night-season, when he was silent and solitary, and retired from the world, then his own conscience (which is called the reins, *Ser. xvii. 10.*) not only reflected with comfort upon the choice he had made, but instructed or admonished him concerning his duty, which he was obliged to by this choice; catechised him, and engaged and quickened him to live as one that had God for his portion, by faith to live upon him and live to him. Those who have God for their portion, who will be faithful to him, must give their own consciences leave to deal thus faithfully and plainly with them.

All this may be applied to Christ, who made the Lord his portion, and was pleased with that portion, made his Father's glory his highest end, and made it his meat and drink to seek that, and to do his will, and delighted to prosecute his undertaking, pursuant to his Father's counsel, depending upon him to maintain his lot and to carry him through his undertaking, we may also apply it to ourselves in singing it, renewing our choice of God as ours, with a holy complacency and satisfaction.

8. I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. 11. Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

All these verses are quoted by St. Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, *Acts ii. 25—28.* And he tells us expressly, that David in them speaketh concerning Christ, and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections towards God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope; and a happy state on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God; but in these holy elevations towards God and heaven he was carried by the spirit of prophecy quite beyond the consideration of himself and his own

case, to fortel the glory of the Messiah in such expressions as were peculiar to him, and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnisheth us with a key to let us into the mystery of these lines.

1. These verses, for certain, must be applied to Christ; of him speaketh the prophet this, as did many of the Old Testament prophets, who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, *1 Pet. i. 11.* and that is the subject of this prophecy here; it is foretold (as he himself shewed concerning this, no doubt, among other prophecies in this psalm, *Luke xxiv. 44—46.*) that *Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.*

1. That he should suffer and die. This is implied here, when he saith, *ver. 8. I shall not be moved,* he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him. When he saith, *my flesh shall rest,* it is implied, that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated, that his soul must go into a state of separation from the body, and that his body so deserted would be in imminent danger of seeing corruption; that he should not only die, but be buried, and abide for some time under the power of death.

2. That he should be wonderfully borne up by the divine power in suffering and dying. (1.) That he should not be moved, nor be driven off from his undertaking, nor sink under the weight of it; that he should not fail nor be discouraged, *Isa. xlii. 4.* but should proceed and persevere in it, till he could say, *It is finished.* Though the service was hard, and the encounter hot, and he trod the wine-press alone; yet he was not moved, did not give up the cause, but set his face as a flint, *Isa. l. 7, 8, 9. Here am I, let these go their way.* Nay, (2.) That his heart should rejoice, and his glory be glad; that he should go on with his undertaking, not only resolutely but cheerfully, and with an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction: witness that saying, *John xvii. 11. Now I am no more in the world, but I come to thee; and that John xviii. 11. The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?* and many the like. By his glory is meant his tongue, as appears *Acts ii. 16.* for our tongue is our glory, and never more so, than when it is employed in glorifying God.

Now there were two things which bore him up, and carried him on thus cheerfully. (1.) The respect he had to his Father's will and glory in what he did: *I have set the Lord always before me;* he still had an eye to his Father's commandment, *John x. 18—xiv. 31.* the will of him that sent him: He aimed at his Father's honour and the restoring of the interests of his kingdom among men, and this kept him from being moved by the difficulties he met with; for he always did those things that pleased his Father. (2.) The assurance he had of his Father's presence with him in his sufferings, *he is at my right hand;* a present help to me, nigh at hand in the time of need, *Isa. l. 3. He is near that justifieth me;* he is at my right hand to direct and strengthen it and hold it up, *Psalms lxxxix. 21.* When he was in his agony an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, *Luke xxii. 43.* To this the victories and triumphs of the cross were all owing, it was the Lord at his right hand that *struck through kings,* *Psalms cx. 5. Isa. xlii. 1, 2.* (3.) The prospect he had of a glorious issue of his sufferings. It was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross, *Heb. xii. 2.* He rested in hope, and that made his rest glorious, *Isa. xi. 10.* He knew he should be justified in the Spirit of his resurrection, and straightway glorified. See *John xiii. 31, 32.*

3. That he should be brought through his sufferings, and brought from under the power of death by a glorious resurrection. (1.) That his soul should not be left in hell, *i. e.* his human spirit should not be long left, as other men's spirits are, in a state of separation from the body, but should in a little time return and be re-united to it, never to part again. (2.) That being God's holy One in a peculiar manner, sanctified to the work of redemption, and perfectly free from sin, he should not see corruption nor feel it. This implies that he should not only be raised from the grave, but raised so soon, that his dead body should not so much as begin to corrupt, which in the course of nature it would have done, if it had not been raised the third day. We that have so much corruption in our souls, must expect that our bodies also will corrupt, *Joh xxiv. 19.* But that holy one of God, who knew no sin, saw no corruption. Under the law it was strictly ordered, that those parts of the sacrifices which were not burnt upon the altar, yet should by no means be kept till the third day, lest they should putrify, *Lev. vii. 15, 18.* which perhaps pointed at Christ's rising the third day, that he might not see corruption, as neither was a bone of him broken.

4. That he should be abundantly recompensed for his sufferings with the joy set before him, *ver. 11.* He was well assured, (1.) That he should not miss of his glory. Thou wilt shew me the path of life, and lead me to that life through this darksome valley; in confidence of this, when he gave up the ghost, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit;* and a little before, *Father, glorify thou me with thine own self.* (2.) That he should be received into the presence of God, to sit at his right hand. His being admitted into God's presence would be the acceptance of his service; and his being set at his right hand, the recompense of it. (3.) Thus, as a reward for the sorrows he underwent for our redemption, he should have a fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore; not only the glory he had with God, as God before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a mediator, in seeing his seed, and the success and prosperity of his undertaking, *Isa. liii. 10, 11.*

2. Christ being the head of the body of the church, these verses may, for the most part, be applied to all good christians, who are guided and animated by the spirit of Christ; and in singing of them, when we have first given glory to Christ, in whom they have to our everlasting comfort had their accomplishment, we may then encourage and edify ourselves and one another with them, and may from hence learn,

1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually at our right hand, wherever we are, to eye him as our chief good and highest end, our owner, ruler and judge, our gracious benefactor, our sure guide and strict observer; and while we do thus, we shall not be moved either from our duty or from our comfort. Blessed Paul set the Lord before him, when, though bonds and afflictions did abide him, he could bravely say, *None of these things move me, Acts xx. 24.*

2. That if our eyes be ever towards God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him; it is our own fault if they do not. If the heart rejoice in God, out of the abundance of that let the mouth speak to his glory, and the edification of others.

3. That dying christians, as well as a dying Christ, may cheerfully put off the body in a believing expectation of a joyful resurrection; *my flesh also shall rest in hope.* Our bodies have little rest in this world, but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, *Isa. lvii. 2.* We have little to hope for from this life, but we shall rest in hope for a better life, *i. e.* we may put off the body in that hope. *Death destroys the hope of man,* *Job xiv. 14.* but not the hope of a good christian, *Prov. xiv. 32.* He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments; hopes that the body shall not be left for ever in the grave; but though it see corruption for a time, it shall at the



the end of time be raised to immortality; Christ's resurrection is an earnest of ours, if we be his.

4. Those who live piously with God in their eye, may die comfortably with heaven in their eye. In this world sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy; all our joys here are empty and defective; but in heaven there is fulness of joy; our pleasures here are transient and momentary and such is the nature of them, that it is not fit they should last long; but those at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls, in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God.

P S A L M XVII.

David being in great distress and danger, by the malice of his enemies, doth in this psalm by prayer address himself to God; his tried refuge, and seek shelter in him. (1.) He appeals to God concerning his integrity, ver. 1—4. (2.) He prays to God still to be upheld in his integrity, and preserved from the malice of his enemies, ver. 5—8. 13. (3.) He gives a character of his enemies, using that as a plea with God for his preservation, ver. 9—12—14. (4.) He comforts himself with the hopes of his future happiness, ver. 14. And some make him in this a type of Christ, who was perfectly innocent, and yet was hated and persecuted; but like David, committed himself and his cause to him that judgeth righteously.

A PRAYER OF DAVID.

1. **H**EAR the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. 2. Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal. 3. Thou hast proved mine heart, thou hast visited me in the night, thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing: I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. 4. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. 5. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. 6. I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God; incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. 7. Shew thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right-hand them which put their trust in thee, from those that rise up against them.

This psalm is a prayer. As there is a time to weep, and a time to rejoice, so there is a time for praise, and a time for prayer. David was now persecuted, probably by Saul, who hunted him like a partridge on the mountains; without were fightings, within were fears, and both drove him to his prayers.

He addresseth himself to God in these verses, both by way of appeal, *Hear the right, O Lord*, i. e. let my righteous cause have a hearing before thy tribunal, and give judgment upon it; and by way of petition, *Give ear unto my prayer*, ver. 1. and again, ver. 6. *Incline thine ear unto me and hear my speech*; not that God needs to be thus pressed with our importunity, but he gives us leave thus to express our earnest desires of his gracious answers to our prayers. These things he pleads with God for audience. (1.) That he was sincere, and did not dissemble with God in his prayers; *it goeth not out of feigned lips*. He meant as he spoke, and the impressions on his mind agreed with the expressions of his mouth. Feigned prayers are fruitless, but if our hearts lead our prayers, God will meet them with his favour. (2.) That he had been used to pray at other times, and it was not his distress and danger that now first brought him to his duty. *I have called upon thee formerly*, ver. 6. therefore, Lord, hear me now. It will be a great comfort to us, if trouble, when it comes, finds the wheels of prayer a-going, for then may we come with the more boldness to the throne of grace. Tradesmen are willing to oblige those that have been long their customers. (3.) That he was encouraged by his faith to expect God would take notice of his prayers; *I know thou wilt hear me, and therefore, O God, incline thine ear to me*. Our believing dependence upon God is a good plea to enforce our desires towards him. Let us now see,

1. What his appeal is. And there observe, (1.) What the court is, to the cognisance and determination of which he doth appeal. It is the court of heaven. Lord, do thou hear the right, for Saul is so passionate, so prejudiced he will not hear it. Lord, let my sentence come forth from thy presence, ver. 2. Men sentence me to be run down and cut off as an evil doer. Lord, I appeal from them to thee. This he did in a public remonstrance before Saul's face, 1 Sam. xxiv. 12. *The Lord judge between me and thee*; and he repeats it here in his private devotions. Note. (1.) The equity and extent of God's government and judgment is a very great support to injured innocency. If we are blackened, and abused, and misrepresented by unrighteous men, it is our comfort that we have a righteous God to go to, who will take our part, who is the patron of the oppressed, whose judgment is according to truth, by the discoveries of which every person and every cause will appear in a true light, stripped of all false colours, and by the decisions of which all unrighteous dooms will be reversed, and to every man will be rendered according to his work. (2.) Sincerity dreads no scrutiny, no not that of God himself, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. *Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal*. God's omniscience is as much the joy of the upright, as it is the terror of hypocrites; and is particularly comfortable to those who are falsely abused, and in any wise have wrong done them.

(2.) What the evidence is by which he hopes to make good his appeal, it is the trial God had made of him, ver. 3. *Thou hast proved mine heart*. God's sentence is therefore right, because he always proceeds upon his own knowledge, which is more certain and infallible, than that which men attain to by the closest views and the strictest searches. He knew God had tried him, (1.) By his own conscience, which is God's deputy in the soul; *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord*, with this God had searched him, and visited him in the night, when he commined with his own heart upon his bed. He had submitted to the search, and had seriously reviewed the actions of his life, to discover what was amiss; but could find nothing of that which his enemies charged him with. (2.) By providence; God had tried him by the fair opportunity he had once and again to kill Saul; and tried him by the malice of Saul, the treachery of his friends and the many provocations that were given him, so that if he had been the man he was represented to be, it would have appeared; but upon all these trials there

was nothing found against him, no proof at all of the things whereof they accuse him.

God tried his heart, and could witness to the integrity of that; but for the further proof of his integrity he himself takes notice of two things, concerning which his conscience bore him record. (1.) That he had a fixed resolution against all tongue sins; *I am purposed and fully determined in the strength of God's grace, that my mouth shall not transgress*. He doth not say, I hope it shall not, or I wish it may not, but I am fully purposed that it shall not; with this bridle he kept his mouth, *Psalm xxxix. 2. Note. Constant resolution and watchfulness against tongue sins, will be a good evidence of our integrity. If any offend not in word the same is a perfect man*, James iii. 2. He doth not say my mouth never shall transgress, for in many things we all offend. But I am purposed that it shall not, and he that searcheth the heart, knows whether the purpose be sincere. (2.) That he had been as careful to refrain from sinful actions, as from sinful words, ver. 4. Concerning the common works of men, the actions and affairs of human life, I have by the direction of thy word, kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Some understand it particularly, that he had not been himself a destroyer of Saul, when it lay in his power, nor had he permitted others to be so, but said to Abishai, *Destroy him not*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 9. But it may be taken, more generally, he kept himself from all evil works, and endeavoured according to the duty of his place, to keep others from them too, Note, (1.) The ways of sin are paths of the destroyer, i. e. of the devil, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, i. e. a destroyer, and who ruins souls by decoying them into the paths of sin. (2.) It concerns us all to keep out of the paths of the destroyer, for if we walk in those ways that lead to destruction, we must thank ourselves if destruction and misery be our portion at last. (3.) It is by the word of God, as our guide and rule, that we must keep ourselves out of the paths of the destroyer, by observing the directions and admonitions of that, *Psalm cxix. 9. (4.) If we carefully avoid all the paths of sin, it will be very comfortable in the reflection, when we are in trouble. If we keep ourselves, that the wicked one touch us not with his temptation*, 1 John v. 18. we may hope he shall not be able to touch us with his terrors.

2. What his petition is: it is in short this; That he might experience the good work of God in him, as an evidence of, and qualification for the good will of God towards him; this is grace and peace from God the Father.

1. He prays for the work of God's grace in him, ver. 5. *Hold up my goings in thy paths*. Lord, I have by thy grace kept me from the paths of the destroyer, by the same grace let me be kept in thy paths, let me not only be restrained from doing that which is evil, but quickened to abound always in that which is good. Let my goings be held in thy paths, that I may not turn back from them, nor turn aside out of them; let them be held up in thy paths, that I may not stumble and fall into sin, that I may not trifle and neglect my duty. Lord, as thou hast kept me hitherto, so keep me still. Those that are through grace going in God's paths, have need to pray, and do pray that their goings may be held up in those paths; for we stand no longer than he is pleased to hold us, we go no further than he is pleased to lead us, bear us up and carry us. David had been kept in the way of his duty hitherto, and yet he doth not think that would be his security for the future, and therefore prays, Lord, still hold me up; Those that would proceed and persevere, in the way of God, must by faith and prayer fetch in daily fresh supplies of grace and strength from him. David was sensible that his way was slippery, that he himself was weak, and not so well fixed and furnished as he should be; that there were those who watched for his halting, and would improve the least slip against him, and therefore he prays, Lord, hold me up, that my foot slip not, that I may never say or do any thing that looks either dishonest, or distrustful of thee and thy providence and promise.

2. He prays for the tokens of God's favour to him, ver. 7. Observe here, (1.) How he eyes God, as the protector and favour of his people, so he calls him, and from that he takes his encouragement in prayer, *O thou that savest by thy right hand*, (by thine own power and needest not the agency of any other) *them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them*. It is the character of God's people, that they trust in him; he is pleased to make them his confidants, for his secret is with the righteous; and they make him their confidence, for to him they commit themselves; those that trust in God have many enemies, many that rise up against them and seek their ruin; but they have one friend that is able to deal with them all, and if he be for them, no matter who is against them. He reckons it his honour to be their saviour. His almighty power is engaged for them, and they have all found him ready to save them. The margin reads it, *O thou that savest them which trust in thee, from those that rise up against thy right hand*. Those that are enemies to the saints, are rebels against God and his right hand, and therefore, no doubt, he will in due time appear against them. (2.) What he expects and desires from God; *Shew thy marvellous loving-kindness*. The word signifies, (1.) Distinguish favours. Set apart thy loving-kindnesses for me, put me not off with common mercies, but be gracious to me, as thou usest to be to those who love thy name. (2.) Wonderful favours. O make thy loving-kindness admirable; i. e. Lord testify thy favour to me in such a way, as that I and others may wonder at it. God's loving-kindness is marvellous, for the freeness and the fulness of it, in some instances it appears in a special manner marvellous, *Psalm cxviii. 24. and it will certainly appear so in the salvation of the saints, when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe*.

8. Keep me as the apple of the eye: hide me under the shadow of thy wings. 9. From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. 10. They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly. 11. They have now compassed us in our steps; they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth; 12. Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. 13. Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down; deliver my soul from the wicked which is thy sword; 14. From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. 15. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.



We may observe in these verses,

1. What David prays for. Being compassed about with enemies that fought his life, he prays to God to preserve him safe, through all their attempts against him, to the crown to which he was anointed; and this prayer was both a prediction of the preservation of Christ, through all the hardships and difficulties of his humiliation, to the glories and joys of his exalted state, and a pattern to Christians to commit the keeping of their souls to God, trusting him to *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom*. He prays,

(1.) That he himself might be protected, *ver. 8.* keep me safe, hide me close, where I may not be found, where I may not be come at. Deliver my soul, not only my mortal life from death, but my immortal spirit from sin. Those who put themselves under God's protection, may in faith implore the benefit of it. He prays that God would keep him, (1.) With as much care as a man keeps the apple of his eye, which nature has wonderfully fenced, and teaches us to guard. If we keep God's law as the *apple of our eye*, Prov. vii. 2. we may expect that God will so keep us, for it is said concerning his people, that *whoso toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye*, Zech. ii. 8. (2.) With as much tenderness as the hen gathers her young ones under her wings; Christ useth the similitude, *Matt. xxiii. 37.* *Hide me under the shadow of thy wings*, where I may be both safe and warm. Or perhaps it rather alludes to the wings of the cherubims shadowing the mercy-seat; let me be taken under the protection of that glorious grace which is peculiar to God's Israel. What David here prays for, was performed to the Son of David our Lord Jesus, of whom it is said, *Ista. xlix. 2.* that God hid him in the shadow of his hand, hid him as a polished shaft in his quiver. David prays, Lord, keep me from the wicked, from men of the world, *i. e.* (1.) From being and doing like them, from walking in their counsel and standing in their way, and eating of their dainties. (2.) From being destroyed and run down by them. Let them not have their will against me, let them not triumph over me.

(2.) That all the designs of his enemies to bring him either into sin or into trouble, might be defeated, *ver. 13.* *Arise, O Lord*, appear for me, disappoint him, and cast him down in his own eyes by the disappointment. While Saul persecuted David, how often did he miss his prey, then when he thought he had him sure enough? and how were Christ's enemies disappointed by his resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death?

2. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions, and his hope of speeding. He pleads,

1. The malice and wickedness of his enemies. They are such as are not fit to be countenanced, such as, if I be not delivered from them by the special care of God himself, will be my ruin. Lord, see what wicked men they are that oppress me, and waste me, and run me down. (1.) They are very spiteful and malicious: they are my deadly enemies, that thirst after my blood, my heart's blood; enemies against the soul, so the word is; David's enemies did what they could to drive him to sin, and drive him away from God, they bid him *go serve other gods*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. and therefore he had reason to pray against them. Note, Those are our worst enemies, and we ought so to account them, that are enemies to our souls. (2.) They are very secure and sensual, insolent and haughty, *ver. 10.* They are inclosed in their own fat, wrap themselves, hug themselves in their own honour, and power, and plenty, and then make light of God, and set his judgments at defiance, *Job xv. 27.* *Psalm lxxiii. 7.* They wallow in pleasure, and promise themselves that to-morrow shall be as this day. And therefore with their mouth they speak proudly, glorying in themselves, blaspheming God, trampling upon his people, and insulting them, see *Jer. xiii. 5, 6.* Lord, are not such men as these fit to be mortified and humbled, and made to know themselves? Will it not be for thy glory to look upon these proud men and abase them? (3.) They are restless and unswerving in their attempts against me, they compass me about, *ver. 9.* They have now in a manner gained their point, they have surrounded us, they have compassed us in our steps, they track us wherever we go, follow us as close as the hounds doth the hare, and take all advantages against us, being both too many for us and too quick for us. And yet they take on them to look another way, and set their eyes bowing down to the earth, as if they were meditating, retired into themselves, and thinking of something else; or (as some think) they are watchful and intent upon it, to do us a mischief; they are down-looked, and never slip an opportunity of compassing their design. (4.) The ring-leader of them, that was Saul, is in a special manner bloody and barbarous, politic and projecting, *ver. 12.* like a lion that lives by prey, and is therefore greedy of it. It is as much the meat and drink of a wicked man to do mischief, as it is of a good man to do good. He is like a young lion lurking in secret places, disguising his cruel designs. This is fitly applied to Saul, who fought David *on the rocks of the wild goats*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 2. and in the wilderness of Ziph, chap. xxvi. 2. where lions used to lurk for their prey.

2. The power God had over them to controul and restrain them. He pleads, (1.) Lord, they are thy sword, and will any father suffer his sword to be drawn against his own children? As this is a reason why we should patiently bear the injuries of men, that they are but the instruments of the trouble, it comes originally from God, to whose will we are bound to submit; so it is an encouragement to us to hope both that their wrath shall praise him, and that the remainder thereof he will restrain, that they are God's sword which he can manage as he pleaseth, which cannot move without him, and which he will sheathe when he has done his work with it. (2.) They are thy hand, by which thou dost chastise thy people, and make them feel thy displeasure. He therefore expects deliverance from God's hand, because from God's hand the trouble came. *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit.* There is no flying from God's hand but by flying to it. It is very comfortable when we are in fear of the power of man, to see it dependent upon, and in subjection to the power of God, see *Ista. x. 6, 7, 15.*

3. Their outward prosperity, *ver. 14.* Lord, appear against them, for, (1.) They are entirely devoted to the world, and care not for thee and thy favour. They are men of the world, acted by the spirit of the world, walking according to the course of this world, in love with the wealth and pleasure of this world, eager in the pursuits of it, and making them their business; and at ease in the enjoyments of it, and making them their bliss. They have their portion in this life, *i. e.* they look upon the good things of this world as the best things, and sufficient to make them happy, and they choose them accordingly, place their felicity in them, aim at them as their chief good, rest satisfied with them, their souls take their ease in them, and they look no farther, nor are in any care to provide for another life. These things are their consolation, *Luke vi. 24.* *their good things*, *Luke xvi. 25.* *their reward*, *Matt. vi. 5.* the penny they agreed for, *Matt. xx. 13.* Now, Lord, shall men of this character be supported and countenanced against those that honour thee, by preferring thy favour before all the wealth in this world, and taking thee for their portion? *Psalm xvi. 5.* (2.) They have abundance of the world, (1.) They have enlarged appetites, and a great deal wherewith to satisfy them, their bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasures. The things of this world are called treasures, because they are so accounted; otherwise to a soul, and

in comparison with eternal blessings, they are but trash: They are hid in the several parts of the creation, and hid in the sovereign disposals of providence. They are God's hid treasures, for the earth is his, and the fullness thereof, though the men of this world think it is their own, and forget God's property in it. They that fare deliciously every day, have their bellies filled with these hid treasures, and they will but fill the belly, 1 Cor. vi. 13. they will not fill the soul, they are not bread for that, nor can they satisfy, *Ista. lv. 2.* They are husks, and ashes, and wind, and yet the most of men having no care for their souls, but all for their bellies, take up with them. (2.) They have numerous families, and a great deal to leave to them. They are full of children, and yet their pasture is not overstocked, they have enough for them all, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes, *i. e.* to their grand-children; and this is their heaven, it is their bliss, it is their all. Lord, said David, deliver me from them, *i. e.* let me not have my portion with them. Deliver me from their designs against me, for they having so much wealth and power, I am not able to deal with them unless the Lord be on my side.

4. He pleads his own dependence upon God as his portion and happiness. They have their portion in this life; but as for me, *ver. 15.* I am none of them, I have but little of the world, *nec habeo, nec carere, nec curare.* It is the vision and fruition of God that I place my happiness in, that is it I hope for, and comfort myself with the hopes of, and thereby distinguish myself from those that have their portion in this life. Beholding God's face with satisfaction may be considered, (1.) As our duty and comfort in this world. We must in righteousness, clothed with Christ's righteousness, having a good heart and a good life, by faith behold God's face, and set him always before us; entertain ourselves from day to day with the contemplation of the beauty of the Lord; and when we awake every morning, we must be satisfied with his likeness, set before us in his word, and with his likeness stamped upon us by his renewing grace. Our experience of God's favour to us, and our conformity to him, should yield us more satisfaction than they have whose belly is filled with the delights of sense, (2.) As our recompence and happiness in the other world; with the prospect of that he concluded the foregoing psalm, and so this. That happiness is prepared and designed only for the righteous that are justified and sanctified: They shall be put in possession of it when they awake, when the soul awakes at death out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes at the resurrection out of its slumber in the grave. That blessedness will consist in three things. (1.) The immediate vision of God and his glory; I shall behold thy face, not as in this world, through a glass darkly. The knowledge of God will there be perfected, and the enlarged intellects filled with it. (2.) The participation of his likeness; our holiness will there be perfect. This results from the former, 1 John iii. 2. when he shall appear, we shall therefore be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (3.) A complete and full satisfaction resulting from all this. I shall be satisfied, abundantly satisfied with it. There is no satisfaction for the soul but in God, and in his face and likeness, his good will towards us, and his good work in us and even that satisfaction will not be perfect till we come to heaven.

## P S A L M XVIII.

This psalm we meet with before in the history of David's life, 2 Sam. xxii. That was the first edition of it, here we have it revived, altered a little, and fitted for the service of the church. It is David's thanksgiving for the many deliverances God had wrought for him, which he desired always to preserve fresh in his own memory, and to diffuse and enlarge the knowledge of them. It is an admirable composition. The poetry is very fine, the images bold, the expressions lofty, and every word proper and significant; but the pity far exceeds the poetry: Holy faith, and love, and joy, and praise, and hope, are here lively, active, and upon the wing. (1.) He triumphs in God, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) He magnifies the deliverance God had wrought for him, *ver. 4—19.* (3.) He takes the comfort of his integrity which God had thereby cleared up, *ver. 20—28.* (4.) He gives to God the glory of all his achievements, *ver. 29—42.* (5.) He encourageth himself with the expectation of what God would farther do for him and his, *ver. 43—50.*

To the chief musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song, in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

1. **I** WILL love thee, O LORD my strength. 2. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer: my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 4. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid: 5. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. 6. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. 7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. 8. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 9. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. 10. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. 11. He made darkness his secret place: his pavillion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. 12. At the brightness that was before him, his thick clouds passed, hail-stones and coals of fire. 13. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail-stones and coals of fire. 14. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them: and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. 15. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered: at thy



thy rebuke, O LORD, as the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. 16. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. 17. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. 18. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: But the LORD was my stay. 19. He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The title gives us the occasion of penning this psalm, we had it before 2 Sam. xxii. 1. only here we are told, that the psalm was delivered *To the chief musician, or precentor in the temple songs.* Note, The private compositions of good men, designed by them for their own use, may be serviceable to the public, that others may not only borrow light from their candle, but heat from their fire. Examples sometimes teach better than rules. And David is here called the servant of the Lord, as Moses was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but because with his sceptre, with his sword and with his pen, he greatly promoted the interest of God's kingdom in Israel. It was more his honour that he was a servant of the Lord, than that he was a king of a great kingdom; and so he himself accounted it, *Pſal. cxvi. 16. O Lord, truly I am thy servant.* In these verses,

1. He triumphs in God and his relation to him. The first words of the psalm, *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,* are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience; And this use we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him: This he requires, and will accept; and we are very ungrateful if we grudge him so poor a return. An interest in the person loved is the lover's delight, this string therefore he touches, and on this he harps with a great deal of pleasure, *per. 2.* The Lord Jehovah is my God; and then, he is my rock, my fortress, all that which I need and can desire in my present distress; For there is that in God, which is suited to all the exigencies and occasions of his people that trust in him. He is my rock, and strength, and fortress; that is, (1.) I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties. (2.) I have chosen him to be so, disclaiming all others, and depending upon him alone to protect me. Those that truly love God may thus triumph in him as theirs, and may with confidence call upon him, *ver. 3.* This further use we should make of our deliverances, we must not only love God the better, but love prayer the better; call upon him as long as we live: especially in time of trouble, with an assurance that so we shall be saved; for thus it is written, that *whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Acts ii. 21.

2. He sets himself to greatness the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God, and his goodness to us in it.

1. The more imminent and threatening the danger was out of which we were delivered, the greater is the mercy of the deliverance. David now remembered how the forces of his enemies poured in upon him, which he calls the floods of Belial, shoals of the children of Belial, likely to overpower him with numbers; they surrounded him, compassed him about; they surprised him, and by that means were very near seizing him, their snares prevented him. And when without were fightings, within were fears and sorrows, *ver. 4, 5.* His spirit was overwhelmed, and he looked upon himself as a gone man, *see Pſal. cxvi. 3.*

2. The more earnest we have been with God for deliverances and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David's deliverances were so, *ver. 6.* David was found a praying man, and God was found a prayer-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall speed as he did. Though distress drive us to prayer, God will not therefore be deaf to us; nay, being a God of pity, he will be the more ready to succour us.

3. The more wonderful God's appearances are in any deliverance, the greater it is: Such were the deliverances wrought for David, in which God's manifestation of his presence and glorious attributes is most magnificently described, *ver. 7, &c.* Little appeared of man, but much of God in these deliverances. 1. He appeared a God of almighty power; for he made the earth shake and tremble, and moved even the foundations of the hills, *ver. 7.* as of old at mount Sinai. When the men of the earth were struck with fear, then the earth might be said to tremble; when the great men of the earth were put into confusion, then the hills moved. 2. He shewed his anger and displeasure against the enemies and persecutors of his people. He was wroth, *ver. 7.* His wroth smoked, it burned, it was fire, it was devouring fire, *ver. 8.* and coals were kindled by it: Those that by their own sins make themselves as coals, *i. e.* fuel to this fire, will be consumed by it. He that ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors, sendeth them forth when he pleaseth, and they are sure to hit the mark, and do execution: for those arrows are lightnings, *ver. 14.* 3. He shewed his readiness to plead his people's cause, and work deliverances for them; for he rode upon a cherub and did fly, for the maintaining of right and the relieving his distressed servants, *ver. 10.* No opposition, no obstruction can be given to him, *who rideth upon the wings of the wind, who rides on the heavens for the help of his people: and in his excellency on the skies.* 4. He shewed his condescension in taking cognizance of David's case, *he bowed the heavens and came down,* *ver. 9.* did not send an angel, but came himself as one afflicted in the afflictions of his people. 5. He wrapped himself in darkness, and yet commanded light to shine out of darkness for his people, *Isa. xlv. 15.* He is a God that hideth himself; for he made darkness his pavilion, *ver. 11.* His glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and his proceedings unaccountable, and so as to us; clouds and darkness are round about him; we know not the way that he takes even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but when his designs are secret, they are kind; for though he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. And at his brightness the thick clouds pass, *ver. 12.* comfort returns, the face of affairs is changed, and that which was gloomy and threatening becomes serene and pleasant.

4. The greater the difficulties are that lie in the way of deliverance, the more glorious the deliverance is. For the rescuing of David, the waters were to be divided till the very channels were seen; the earth was to be cloven till the very foundations of it were discovered, *ver. 15.* There were waters deep and many, waters out of which he was to be drawn, *ver. 16.* as Moses, who from thence had his name, because he was drawn out of the water literally, so David figuratively. His enemies were strong, and they hated him; had he been left to himself, they had been too strong for him, *ver. 17.* And they were too quick for him; for they prevented him in the day of his calamity, *ver. 18.* But in the midst of his troubles the Lord was his stay, so that he did not sink. Note, God will not deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them and bear them up under their troubles in the mean time.

VOL. II. No. LXXX.\*

5. That which especially magnified the deliverance was, that his comfort was the fruit of it, and God's favour was the root and fountain of it. (1.) It was an introduction to his preferment, *ver. 19.* He brought me forth also out of my straits into a large place, where I had not only room to turn me, but room to thrive. (2.) It was a token of God's favour to him, and that made it doubly sweet; *he delivered me, because he delighted in me,* not for my merit, but for his own grace and good-will. Compare this with 2 Sam. xv. 26. *If he thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am.* We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight God had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well pleased.

In singing this, we must triumph in God, and trust in him; and we may apply it to Christ the Son of David; the sorrows of death surrounded him, in his distress he prayed, *Heb. v. 7.* God made the earth to shake and tremble, and the rocks to rend, and brought him out in his resurrection into a large place, because he delighted in him and in his undertaking.

20. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 21. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 22. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. 23. I was also upright before him; and I kept myself from mine iniquity. 24. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eye-sight. 25. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. 26. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward, thou wilt shew thyself froward. 27. For thou wilt save the afflicted people: but wilt bring down high looks. 28. For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

1. Here, 1. David reflects with comfort upon his own integrity, and rejoiceth in the testimony of his conscience, that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom, 2 Cor. i. 12. His deliverances were an evidence of this, and this was the great comfort of his deliverances. His enemies had misrepresented him, and perhaps when his troubles continued long, he began to suspect himself; but when God visibly took his part, he had both the credit and the comfort of his righteousness. (1.) His deliverances cleared his innocence before men, and acquitted him from those crimes which he was falsely accused of. This he calls *rewarding him according to his righteousness,* *ver. 20, 21, i. e.* determining the controversy between him and his enemies, according to the justice of his cause, and cleanness of his hands, from that sedition, treason, and rebellion, with which he was charged. He had often appealed to God concerning his innocence; and now God had given judgment upon the appeal (as he always will) according to equity. (2.) They confirmed the testimony of his own conscience for him, which he here reviews with a great deal of pleasure, *ver. 21, 22, 23.* His own heart knows, and is ready to attest it, (1.) That he had kept firm to his duty, and had not departed, not wickedly, not wilfully departed from his God. They that forsake the ways of the Lord, do in effect depart from their God, that it is a wicked thing to do so. But though we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet if we recover ourselves by repentance, and go on in the way of our duty, it shall not be construed a departure; for it is not a wicked departure from our God. (2.) That he had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands, *ver. 22.* *All his judgments were before me;* and I had a respect unto them all, despised none as little, disliked none as hard; but made it my care and business to conform to them all. His statutes I did not put away from me, out of my sight, out of my mind, but kept my eye always upon them, and did not as those, who, because they would quit the ways of the Lord, desire not the knowledge of those ways. (3.) That he had kept himself from his iniquity, and thereby had approved himself upright before God. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which doth most easily beset us, and to mortify the habit of it, will be a good evidence for us that we are upright before God. As David's deliverances cleared his integrity, so did the exaltation of Christ clear his, and for ever roll away the reproach that was cast upon him; and therefore he is said to be *justified in the Spirit,* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

2. He takes occasion from hence to lay down the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, *ver. 25, 26.* (1.) Those that shew mercy to others (even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit, no not of their works of mercy, and they) shall find mercy with God, *Matt. v. 7.* (2.) Those that are faithful to their covenants with God, and the relations wherein they stand to him, shall find him all that to them which he has promised to be. Wherever God finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God. (3.) Those that serve God with a pure conscience shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, *i. e.* very sure to be depended on, and very sweet to be delighted in. (4.) Those that resist God, and walk contrary to him, he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, *Lev. xxvi. 21, 24.*

3. From thence he speaks comfort to the humble, *Thou wilt save the afflicted people,* that are wrong and bear it patiently: Terror to the proud, thou wilt bring down high looks, that aim high, and expect great things for themselves, and look with scorn and disdain upon the poor and pious; and encouragement to himself, *Thou wilt light my candle, i. e.* thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit, and not leave me melancholy; thou wilt recover me out of my troubles, and restore me to peace and prosperity; thou wilt make my honour bright, which is now eclipsed; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee, and the interest of thy kingdom among men.

Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements, in singing these verses encourage themselves, that God himself will be a light to them.

29. For by thee I have run through a troop: and by my God have I leaped over a wall. 30. As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him. 31. For who

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is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? 32. It is God that girdeth me with strength and maketh my way perfect. 33. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon high places. 34. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 35. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. 36. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; that my feet did not slip. 37. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. 38. I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. 39. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rise up against me. 40. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies: that I might destroy them that hate me. 41. They cried, but *there was none to save them: even unto the LORD*, but he answered them not. 42. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. 43. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people: and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. 44. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me; the strangers shall submit themselves unto me. 45. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places. 46. The LORD liveth, and blessed be my rock: and let the God of my salvation be exalted. 47. It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people unto me. 48. He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 49. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen; and sing praises unto thy name. 50. Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

In these verses,

1. David looks back with thankfulness upon the great things which God had done for him; he had not only wrought deliverance for him, but had given him victory and success, and made him triumph over those who thought to have triumphed over him. When we set ourselves to praise God for one mercy, we must be led by that to observe the many more with which we have been compassed about and followed all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise, in reviewing the several steps by which we have risen to our prosperity. (1.) God had given him all his skill and understanding in military affairs, which he has not bred up to nor designed for: his genius leading him more to music and poetry, and a contemplative life: *He teacheth my hands to war*, ver. 34. (2.) God had given him bodily strength to go through the business and fatigue of war: *God girded him with strength*, ver. 32, 39. to that degree, that he could break even a bow of steel, ver. 34. What service God designs men for, he will be sure to fit them for. (3.) God had likewise given him great swiftness, not to flee from the enemies, but to fly upon them, ver. 33. *He maketh my feet like hinds' feet*, ver. 36. *Thou hast enlarged my steps under me*; but (whereas those that take large steps are apt to tread awry) my feet did not slip. He was so swift that he pursued his enemies and overtook them, ver. 37. (4.) God had made him very bold and daring in his enterprises, and given him spirit proportionable to his strength. If a troop stood in his way, he made nothing of running through them; if a wall, he made nothing to leap over it, ver. 29. If ramparts and bulwarks, he soon mounted them; and by divine assistance set his feet upon the high places of the enemy, ver. 33. (5.) God had protected him, and kept him safe in the midst of the greatest perils; many a time they put his life in his hand, and yet it was wonderfully preserved. *Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation*, ver. 35. and that has compassed me on every side; by that I have been delivered from the strivings of the people that aimed at my destruction, ver. 43. particularly from the violent man, ver. 48. viz. Saul, who more than once threw a javelin at him. (6.) God had prospered and succeeded him in his designs; he it was that made his way perfect, ver. 32. and it was his right hand that held him up, ver. 35. (7.) God had given him victory over his enemies, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and all that fought against Israel; those especially he means, yet not excluding the house of Saul, which opposed his coming to the crown, and the partisans of Absalom and Sheba who would have deposed him. He enlargeth much upon the goodness of God to him in defeating his enemies, attributing his victories not to his own sword or bow, or the valour of his mighty men, but to the favour of God. I pursued them, ver. 37. I wounded them, ver. 38. *For thou hast girded me with strength*, ver. 39. else I could not have done it. All the praise is ascribed to God, *thou hast subdued them under me*, ver. 39. *Thou hast given me their necks*, ver. 40. not only to trample upon them, as *Josh. x. 24.* but to cut them off. Even those that hated David, whom God loved, and were enemies to the Israel of God, yet in their distresses cried unto the Lord, but in vain, he answered them not; How could they expect he should, when it was he they fought against? And when he disowned them (as he will all those that act against his people) no other succours could stand them in stead, *there was none to save them*, ver. 41. Those whom God has abandoned, are easily vanquished, *Then did I beat them as small as the dust*, ver. 42. But those whose cause is just, he avengeth, ver. 47. and those whom he favours will certainly be *lifted up above those that rise up against them*, ver. 48. (8.) God hath raised him to the throne, and not only delivered him and kept him alive, but dignified him and made him great, ver. 35. *Thy gentleness hath increased me*; Thy discipline and instruction, so some. The good lessons David learned in his afflictions, prepared him for the dignity and power that were intended him; and the lessening of him helped very much to greatness him. God made him not only a great conqueror, but a great ruler; *Thou hast made*

*me the head of the heathen*, ver. 43. all the neighbour nations were tributaries to him. See 2 Sam. viii. 6. 11. In all this David was a type of Christ, whom the Father brought safely through his conflicts with the powers of darkness, and made victorious over them, and gave to be head over all things to his church, which is his body.

2. David looks up with humble and reverent adorations of the divine glory and perfection; when God had by his providence magnified him, he endeavours with his praises to magnify God, to bless him and exalt him, ver. 46. He gives honour to him, (1.) As a living God, *the Lord liveth*, ver. 46. We had our lives at first from, and we owe the continuance of them to, that God who has life in himself, and is therefore fitly called the living God; the gods of the heathen were dead gods; the best friends we have among men are dying friends; but God lives, lives for ever, and will not fail those that trust in him, but because he lives, they shall live also; for he is their life. (2.) As a finishing God; As for God, he is not only perfect himself, but *his way is perfect*, ver. 30. He is known by his name Jehovah, *Exod. vi. 3.* a God performing and perfecting what he begins, in providence as well as creation, *Gen. ii. 1.* If it was God that made David's way perfect, ver. 32. much more is his own so. There is no flaw in God's works, nor any fault to be found with what he doth, *Eccles. iii. 14.* And what he undertakes he will go through with, whatever difficulties lie in the way, what God begins to build, he is able to finish. (3.) As a faithful God; *The word of the Lord is tried*; I have tried it, (saith David) and it has not failed me; all the saints in all ages have tried it, and it never failed any that trusted in it. It is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mixture and alloy as lessen the value of men's words. David, in God's providences concerning him, takes notice of the performance of his promises to him, which as it puts sweetness into the providence, so it puts honour upon the promise. (4.) As the protector and defender of his people. David had found him so to him, he is the *God of my salvation*, ver. 46. by whose power and grace I am, and hope to be saved: but not of mine only, he is *buckler to all those that trusted in him*, ver. 30. He shelters and protects them all, is both able and ready to do so. (5.) As a non-such in all this, ver. 31. There is a God, and who is God, save Jehovah; That God is a rock for the support and shelter of his faithful worshippers, and who is a rock, save our God? Thus he not only gives glory to God, but encourages his own faith in him. Note, (1.) Whoever pretend to be deities, it is certain there is none God, save the Lord, all others are counterfeits, *Isa. xlv. 8. Jer. x. 10.* (2.) Whoever pretend to be our felicities, there is no rock, save our God; none that we can depend upon to make us happy.

3. David looks forward with a believing hope that God would still do him good. He promiseth himself, (1.) That his enemies should be completely subdued, and those of them that yet remain should be made his footstool. That his government should be extensive, so that even a people whom he had not known should serve him, ver. 43. That his conquests, and consequently his acquisitions, should be easy; *As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me*, ver. 44. And that his enemies should be convinced, that it was to no purpose to oppose him; even those that are retired to their fastnesses, shall not trust to them, but be afraid out of their close places, having seen so much of David's wisdom, courage and success. Thus the Son of David, though he sees not yet all things put under him, yet knows he shall reign till all opposing rule, principality and power, shall be quite put down.

(2.) That his seed should be for ever continued in the Messiah, who he foresaw should come from his loins, ver. 50. He sheweth mercy to his anointed, his Messiah, to David himself, the anointed of the God of Jacob in the type, and to his seed for evermore; *He saith not unto seeds of many, but to his seed, as of one that of Christ*, Gal. iii. 16. It is he only that shall reign for ever, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Christ is called David, *Hos. iii. 5.* God has called him his king, *Psal. ii. 6.* Great deliverance doth God give, and will he give to him, and to his church and people, here called his seed for evermore.

And in singing these verses we must give God the glory of the victories of Christ and his church hitherto, and all the deliverances and advancements of the gospel-kingdom; and encourage ourselves and one another with an assurance, that the church militant will be shortly triumphant, will be eternally so.

## P S A L M XIX.

There are two excellent books which the great God hath published for the instruction and edification of the children of men; and this psalm treats of them both, and recommends them both to our diligent study. 1. The book of the creatures, in which we may easily read the power and Godhead of the Creator, ver. 1—6. 2. The book of the scriptures, which makes known to us the will of God concerning our duty: He shews the excellency and usefulness of that book, ver. 7—11. and then teaches us how to improve it, ver. 12—14.

To the chief Musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **T**HE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. 2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. 4. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world; in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun. 5. Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. 6. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

From the things that are seen every day by all the world, the psalmist in these verses leads us to the consideration of the invisible things of God, whose being appears incontestibly evident, and whose glory shines transcendently bright in the visible heavens, the structure and beauty of them, and the order and influence of the heavenly bodies. This instance of the divine power serves not only to shew the folly of atheists, who see there is a heaven, and yet say there is no God; but to shew the folly of idolaters also, and the vanity of their imagination, who, though the heavens declare the glory of God, yet gave that glory to the lights of heaven, which those very lights directed them to give to God only, the Father of lights. Now observe here,

1. What



1. What that is which the creatures notify to us: They are many ways useful and serviceable to us, but in nothing so much as in this, that they declare the glory of God, by shewing his handy-works, *ver. 1.* They plainly speak themselves to be God's handy works; for they could not exist from eternity, all succession and motion must have had a beginning; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction; they could not be produced by a casual hit of atoms, that is an absurdity, fit rather to be bantered than reasoned with; therefore they must have a Creator, who can be no other than an eternal mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Thus it appears they are God's works, the *work of his fingers*, *Pfal. viii. 2.* and therefore they declare his glory. From the excellency of the work, we may easily infer the infinite perfection of its great author. From the brightness of the heavens, we may collect that the Creator is light; their vastness of extent speaks his immensity; their height his transcendency and sovereignty; their influence upon this earth, his dominion and providence, and universal beneficence: and all declare his almighty power by which they were at first made; and continue to this day, according to the ordinances that were then settled.

2. What are some of those things which do notify this?

(1.) The heavens and the firmament: the vast expanse of air and æther, and the spheres of the planets, and fixed stars. Man has this advantage above the beasts, in the structure of his body, that whereas they are made to look downward, as their spirits must go, he is made erect to look upwards, because upwards his spirit must shortly go, and his thoughts should now rise.

(2.) The constant and regular succession of day and night, *ver. 2.* *Day unto day and night unto night*, speak the glory of that God who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has from the beginning to this day preserved that established order without variation, according to God's covenant with Noah, *Gen. viii. 22.* that *while the earth remains, day and night shall not cease*; to which covenant of providence, the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, *Jer. xxxiii. 20.—xxxii. 35.* The counterchanging of day and night in so exact a method is a great instance of the power of God, and calls us to observe, that as in the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, *he forms the light and creates the darkness*, *Isa. xlv. 7.* and sets the one over against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to man; for he makes the *outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice*, *Pfal. lxxv. 8.* Not only glorifies himself, but gratifies us by this constant revolution; for as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night; every day and every night speaks the goodness of God, and when it has finished its testimony, leaves to the next day, to the next night, to say the same.

(3.) The light and influence of the sun doth in a special manner declare the glory of God; for of all the heavenly bodies, that is the most conspicuous in itself, and most useful to this lower world, which would be all dungeon and all desert without it. It is not an improbable conjecture, that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun in view, and from the brightness of it took occasion to declare the glory of God. Concerning the sun, observe here, (1.) The place appointed him; In the heavens God hath set a tabernacle for the sun. The heavenly bodies called hosts of heaven, and therefore are fitly said to dwell in tents, as soldiers in their encampments: the sun is said to have a tabernacle set him, not only because he is in continual motion, and never has a fixed residence, but because the mansion he has, will, at the end of time, be taken down like a tent, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the sun shall be turned into darkness. (2.) The course assigned him: That glorious creature was not made to be idle, but his going forth (at least as it appears to our eye) is from one point of the heavens, and his circuit from thence to the opposite point, and thence, to complete his diurnal revolution, to the same point again; and this with such steadiness and constancy, that we can certainly foretell what hour and what minute the sun will rise at such a place any day to come. (3.) The brightness wherein he appears: He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, richly dressed up and adorned, as fine as hands can make him, looking pleasantly himself, and making all about him pleasant; for the friend of the bridegroom rejoiceth greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice, *John iii. 29.* (4.) The cheerfulness wherewith he makes his tour: Though it seems a vast round he has to walk, and he has not a moment's rest, yet in obedience to the law of his creation, and for the service of man, he not only doth it, but doth it with a great deal of pleasure, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. With such satisfaction did Christ the sun of righteousness finish the work that was given him to do. (5.) His universal influence on this earth: There is nothing hid from the heat thereof, no not metals in the bowels of the earth, which the sun has an influence upon.

3. To whom this declaration is made of the glory of God; it is made to all parts of the world, *ver. 3, 4.* *There is no speech nor language, (i. e. no nation, for the nations were divided after their tongues, Gen. x. 32.) where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone through all the earth, (the equinoctial line suppose) and with it, their words to the end of the world, proclaiming the eternal power of the God of nature, ver. 4.* The apostle useth this as a reason why the Jews should not be angry with him and others for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without a witness among them, *Rom. x. 18.* so that they were without excuse if they were idolaters, *Rom. i. 20, 21.* And those were without blame that by preaching the gospel to them endeavoured to turn them from their idolatry. If God used these means to prevent their apostasy, and they proved ineffectual, the apostles did well to use other means to recover them from it. They have no speech or language, (so some read it) and yet their voice is heard. All people may hear these natural immortal preachers to speak to them in their own tongue, the wonderful works of God.

And in singing these verses, we must give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the sun of righteousness.

7. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. 11. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. 12. Who can

understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. 13. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. 14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.

God's glory, that is his goodness to man, appears much in the works of creation, but much more in and by divine revelation. The holy scripture, as it is a rule both of our duty to God and of our expectation from him, is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works might have served, if man had retained his integrity; but to recover him out of his fallen state, another course must be taken; that must be done by the word of God. And here,

1. The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God, in six sentences, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* in each of which the name Jehovah is repeated, and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority and all its excellency from the law-maker. Here are six several titles of the word of God, to take in the whole of divine revelation, precepts and promises, and especially the gospel. Here are several good properties of it which prove its divine original, which recommend it to our affection, and which extol it above all other laws whatsoever; and here are several good effects of the law upon the minds of men, which shew what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of divine grace is going along with it, and working by it.

1. The law of the Lord is perfect, it is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and perfectly fitted for the end for which it was designed: it will make the man of God perfect, *2 Tim. iii. 17.* Nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it. It is of use to convert the soul, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty; for it shews us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God, and the indispensable necessity of our return to him.

2. The testimony of the Lord (which witnesseth for him to us) is sure, incontestably and inviolably sure, what we may give credit to, may rely upon, and may be confident it will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure fountain of living comforts, and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. It is of use to make us wise, wise to salvation, *2 Tim. 15.* It will give us an insight into things divine, and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work, and secure to us our true interests. It will make even the simple wise for their souls and eternity, who yet are no conjurors (as we say) for this world. Those that are humbly simple, i. e. sensible of their own folly, and willing to be taught, those shall be made wise by the word of God, *Pfal. xxv. 9.*

3. The statutes of the Lord (enacted by his authority, and binding to all wheresoever they come) they are right, exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil; that is, with the right reason of man, and the right counsels of God. All God's precepts concerning all things are right, *Pfal. cxix. 128.* just as they should be, and they will set us to rights if we receive them, and submit to them; and because they are right, they rejoice the heart. The law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy: and when it is written in our hearts, it lays a foundation for lasting joy, by restoring us to our right mind.

4. The commandment of the Lord is pure: it is clear without darkness, it is clean without dross or defilement. It is itself purified from all alloy, and is purifying to those who receive and embrace it. It is the ordinary means which the spirit useth in enlightening the eyes; it brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty.

5. The fear of the Lord, i. e. true religion and godliness prescribed in the word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life, it is clean, clean itself, and it will make us clean, *John xv. 3.* It will cleanse our way, *Pfal. cxix. 9.* And it endureth for ever, i. e. it is of a perpetual obligation, and can never be repealed; the ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God is ever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil.

6. The judgments of the Lord, all his precepts, which are framed in infinite wisdom, they are true, they are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are righteous, all consonant to natural equity; and they are so altogether, there is no unrighteousness in any of them, but they are all of a piece.

2. He expresseth the great value he had for the word of God, and the great advantage he had hoped to have by it, *ver. 10, 11.*

1. See how highly he prized the commandments of God; it is the character of all good people, that they prefer their religion and the word of God, (1.) Far before all the wealth of the world; it is more desirable than gold; than fine gold, than much fine gold. Gold is of the earth, earthly, but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body, and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul, and the concerns of eternity. (2.) Far before all the pleasures and delights of sense. The word of God received by faith, is sweet to the soul, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore debase the great soul of man; the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

2. See what use he made of the precepts of God's word: *by them is thy servant warned.* The word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns of the duty we are to do, the dangers we are to avoid, and the deluge we are to prepare for, *Ezek. iii. 17.—xxxiii. 7.* It warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. And all that are indeed God's servants take this warning.

3. See what advantages he promised himself by his obedience to God's precepts; *In keeping of them there is great reward.* Those who make conscience of their duty, will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward not only after keeping, but in keeping God's commandments; a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Religion is health and honour, it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet, and our crosses easy, life truly valuable, and death itself truly desirable.

3. He draws some good inferences from this pious meditation, upon the excellency of the word of God. Such thoughts as these should excite in us devout affections, and then they are to good purpose.

1. He takes occasion from hence to make a penitent reflection upon his sins; for *by the law is the knowledge of sin.* Is the commandment thus holy, just and good, then who can understand his errors? I cannot, whoever can. From the rectitude of the divine law he learns to call his sins his errors; if



the commandment be true and righteous, every transgression of the commandment is an error, as grounded upon a mistake; every wicked practice takes rise from some corrupt principle, it is a deviation from the rule we are to work by, the way we are to walk in. From the extent and strictness and spiritual nature of the divine law, he learns that his sins are so many, that he cannot understand the number of them; and so exceeding sinful, that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. We are guilty of many sins, which, through our carelessness and partiality to ourselves, we are not aware of; many we have been guilty of, which we have forgotten; so that when we have been never so particular in the confession of sin, we must conclude with an *& cetera*, and such like: for God knows a great deal more evil by us, than we do by ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how often he offends? It is well we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

2. He takes occasion from hence to pray against sin; all the discoveries of sin made us by the law, should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray as David doth here.

(1.) For mercy to pardon; finding himself unable to instance in all the particulars of his transgressions, he cries out, *Lord cleanse me from my secret faults*; not secret to God, for none are; nor only such as are secret to the world, but such as were hid from his own observation of himself. The best of men have reason to suspect themselves guilty of many secret faults, and to pray to God to cleanse them from that guilt, and not to lay it to their charge; for even our sins of infirmity and inadvertency, and our secret sins, would be our ruin, if God should deal with us according to the desert of them. Even the secret faults are defiling, and render us unfit for communion with God; but when they are pardoned, we are cleansed from them, 1 John i. 7.

(2.) For grace to help in time of need: having prayed that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays that presumptuous sins might be prevented, ver. 13. All that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are in care not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly, as appears by their prayers which concur with David here. Where observe, (1.) His petition, *Keep me from ever being guilty of a wilful presumptuous sin*; we ought to pray that we may be kept from sins of infirmity, but especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God, and wound conscience, which wither our comforts and shock our hopes. However, let none such have dominion over me, let me not be at the command of any such sin, nor be captive by it. (2.) His plea: *so shall I be upright, i. e. I shall appear myself upright; I shall preserve the evidence and comfort of my uprightness, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression*; so he calls a presumptuous sin, because no sacrifice was accepted for it, Numb. xv. 28, 29, 30. Note. 1. Presumptuous sins are very heinous and dangerous: those that sin against the habitual convictions and actual admonitions of their own consciences, in contempt and defiance of the law and its sanctions, that sin with a high hand, they sin presumptuously, and it is a great transgression. 2. Even good men ought to be jealous of themselves, and afraid of sinning presumptuously, yea, though through the grace of God they have hitherto been kept from them. Let none be high-minded, but fear. 3. Being so much exposed, we have great need to pray to God, when we are pushing forwards towards a presumptuous sin, to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing the temptation, or by his grace giving us victory over it.

3. He takes occasion humbly to beg the divine acceptance of those his pious thoughts and affections, ver. 14. Observe the connexion of this with what goes before: He prays to God to keep him from sin, and then begs he would accept his performances; for if we favour our sins, we cannot expect God should favour us our services, Psal. lvi. 18. Observe, (1.) What his services were, *the words of his mouth, and meditations of his heart*, i. e. his holy affections offered up to God. The pious meditations of the heart must not be smothered, but expressed in the words of our mouth, for God's glory and the edification of others; and the words of our mouth in prayer and praise must not be formal, but arising from the meditation of the heart, Psal. xlv. 1. (2.) What was his care concerning these services; that they might be acceptable with God, else what do they avail us? Gracious souls have all they aim at if they be accepted of God, for that is their bliss, (3.) What encouragement he had to hope for this; because God was his strength and his redeemer. If we seek assistance from God as our strength in our religious duties, we may hope to find acceptance with God of our duties: for by his strength we have power with him.

In singing this, we should get our hearts much affected with the excellency of the word of God, and delivered into it, and much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it, and the danger we are in by it, and fetch in help from heaven against it.

## P S A L M XX.

*It is the will of God that prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings should be made in a special manner for kings and all in authority; This psalm is a prayer, and the next a thanksgiving for the king. David was a martial prince, much in war. Either this psalm was penned upon occasion of some particular expedition of his, or in general as a form to be used in the daily service of the church for him. In this psalm we may observe, (1.) What it is they beg of God for the king, ver. 1—4. (2.) With what assurance they beg it. The people triumph, ver. 5. The prince, ver. 6. Both together, ver. 7, 8. And so he concludes with a prayer to God for audience, ver. 9. In this David may well be looked upon as a type of Christ, to whose kingdom and its interests among men the church was in every age a hearty well-wisher.*

¶ To the chief Musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **T**HE LORD hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. 2. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. 3. Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifice, Selah. 4. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel. 5. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

This prayer for David is intitled, a psalm of David; nor was it any absurdity at all for him, who was divinely inspired, to draw up a direction or form of prayer to be used in the congregation for himself and those in authority under him: nay, it is very proper for those who desire the prayers of their friends, to tell them particularly what they would have to be asked

of God for them. Note, Even great and good men, and those that know never so well how to pray for themselves, yet must not despise, but earnestly desire the prayers of others for them, even those that are their inferiors in all respects. Paul often begged of his friends to pray for him. Magistrates and those in power ought to esteem and encourage praying people, to reckon them their strength, *Sech. xii. 5—10.* and to do what they can for them, that they may have an interest in their prayers, and may do nothing to forfeit it. Now observe here,

1. What it is that they are taught to ask of God for the king.

(1.) That God would answer his prayers. *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble*, ver. 1. and *the Lord fulfil all thy petitions*, ver. 5. Note, (1.) Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. It was often a day of trouble with David himself, of disappointment and distress, of treading down and of perplexity. Neither the crown on his head nor the grace in his heart would exempt him from trouble. (2.) Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. David, though a man of business, a man of war, yet was constant to his devotions; though he had prophets and priests and many good people among his subjects to pray for him, yet he did not think that excused him from praying for himself. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or of their ministers or friends for them, who are capable of praying for themselves, and yet neglect it. The prayers of others for us must be desired, not to supersede but to second our own for ourselves. Happy the people, that have praying princes, to whose prayers they may thus say, *Amen*.

(2.) That God would protect his person, and preserve his life in the perils of war. *The name of the God of Jacob defend thee*, and set thee out of the reach of thine enemies. (1.) Let God by his providence keep thee safe, even the God who preserved Jacob in the days of his trouble. David had mighty men for his guards, but he commits himself, and his people commit him, to the care of the almighty God. (2.) Let God by his grace keep thee easy from the fear of evil, *Prov. xxviii. 10.* *The name of the Lord is a strong tower*, into which the righteous run by faith and are safe; let David be enabled to shelter himself in that strong tower, as he has done many a time.

(3.) That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the public good; that in the day of battle he would *send him help out of the sanctuary, and strength out of Zion*, not from common providence, but from the ark of the covenant, and the peculiar favour God bears to his chosen people Israel. That he would help him in performance of the promises, and in answer to the prayers made in the sanctuary. Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the tokens of God's peculiar love; the blessing of God even our own God. Strength out of Zion is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that is it we should most desire both for ourselves and others, in services and sufferings.

(4.) That God would testify his gracious acceptance of the sacrifices he offered with his prayers, according to the law of that time, before he went out on this dangerous expedition. *The Lord remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt-sacrifices*, ver. 3. or turn them to ashes; i. e. the Lord give thee the victory and success, which thou didst by prayer with sacrifices ask of him, and thereby give us full proof of his acceptance of the sacrifice, as ever he did by kindling it with fire from heaven. By this we may now know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and divine affection, and with that makes our hearts burn within us.

(5.) That God would crown all his enterprizes and noble designs for the public welfare with the desired success, ver. 4. *The Lord grant thee according to thine own heart*. This they might in faith pray for, because they knew David was a man after God's own heart, and would design nothing but what was pleasing to him. Those who make it their business to glorify God, may expect that God will one way or other gratify them; and they who walk in his counsel may promise themselves that he will fulfil theirs. *Thou shalt devise a thing, and it shall be established unto thee*.

2. What confidence they had of an answer of peace to these petitions for themselves and their good king, ver. 5. *We will rejoice in thy salvation*. We that are subjects will rejoice in the preservation and prosperity of our prince; or rather, in thy salvation, O God, in thy power and promise to save will we rejoice, that is it we depend upon now, and which in the issue we shall have occasion greatly to rejoice in. Those that have their eye still upon the salvation of the Lord, shall have their hearts filled with the joy of that salvation. *In the name of our God will we set up our banners*. (1.) We will wage war in his name, we will see that our cause be good, and make his glory our end in every expedition; we will ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; we will follow his conduct, implore his aid and depend upon it, and refer the issue to him. David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts, 1 Sam. xvii. 45. (2.) We will celebrate our victories in his name. When we lift up our banners in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be in the name of our God; he shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honour that is due to him.

In singing this, we ought to offer up to God our hearty good wishes to the good government we are under, and to the prosperity of it. But we may look farther; these prayers for David are prophecies concerning Christ the Son of David; and in them they were abundantly answered, he undertook the work of our redemption, and made war upon the powers of darkness; in the day of trouble, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful the Lord heard him, heard in that he feared, *Heb. v. 7.* *Sent him help out of the sanctuary*, sent him an angel from heaven to strengthen him, took cognizance of his offering, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and accepted his burnt-sacrifice, turned it to ashes; the fire that should have fastened upon the sinner, fastening upon the sacrifice, with which God was well pleased. And he granted him according to his own heart, made him to see of the travail of his soul to his satisfaction, prospered his good pleasure in his hand, fulfilled all his petitions for himself and us; for him the Father heareth always, and his intercession is ever prevailing.

6. Now know I, that the LORD saveth his anointed, he will hear him from his holy heaven, with the saving strength of his right hand. 7. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. 8. They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright. 9. Save, LORD, let the king hear us when we call.

Here is, 1. Holy David himself triumphing in the interest he had in the prayers of good people, ver. 6. *Now know I* (I that pen the psalm know it) *that the Lord saved his anointed*, because he hath stirred up the hearts of the seed of Jacob to pray for him. Note, It bodes well to any prince or people, and may justly be taken as a happy resage, when God pours



pours upon them a spirit of prayer. If he sees us seeking him, he will be found of us; if he cause us to hope in his word, he will establish his word to us. Now so many that have an interest in heaven are praying for him; he doubts not but that God will hear him, and grant him an answer of peace, which will, (1.) Take its rise from above, he will hear him from his holy heaven, of which the sanctuary was a type, *Heb. ix. 23.* from the throne he hath prepared in heaven, of which the mercy seat was a type. (2.) It shall take its effect here below. He will hear him with the saving strength of his right hand, *i. e.* he will give a real answer to his prayers and the prayers of his friends for him, not by letter or by word of mouth, but, which is much better, by his right hand, by the saving strength of his right hand. He will make it to appear he hears him by what he doth for him.

2. His people triumphing in God, and their relation to him, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world. (1.) See the difference between worldly people and godly people in their confidences, *ver. 7.* The children of this world trust in second causes, and think all is well if those do but smile upon them; they trust in chariots and in horses, and the more of them they can bring into the field, the more sure they are of success in their wars; probably David has here an eye to the Syrians, whose forces consisted much of chariots and horsemen, as we find in the history of David's victories over them, *2 Sam. viii. 4—x. 18.* But, say the Israelites, we neither have chariots and horses to trust to, nor do we want them, nor if we had them would we build our hopes of success upon that, but we will remember and rely upon the name of the Lord our God: upon the relation we stand into him as the Lord our Lord, and the knowledge we have of him by his name, *i. e.* all that whereby he makes himself known, this we will remember, and upon every remembrance of it will be encouraged. Note, Those who make God and his name their praise, may make God and his name their trust. (2.) See the difference in the issue of their confidence, and by that we are judges of the wisdom of the choice: things are as they prove; see who will be ashamed of their confidence, and who not, *ver. 8.* They that trust in their chariots, and horses are brought down and fallen, and their chariots and horses were so far from saving them, that they helped to sink them, and made them the easier and richer prey to the conqueror, *2 Sam. viii. 4.* But we that trust in the name of the Lord our God, not only stand upright and keep our ground, but are risen and have got ground against the enemy, and have triumphed over them. Note, A believing and obedient trust in God and his name, is the surest way both to preferment and to establishment, to rise and to stand upright, and this will stand us in stead, when creature confidences fail those that depend upon them.

3. They conclude their prayer for the king with an hosanna, *Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord! ver. 9.* As we read this verse, it may be taken as a prayer that God would not only bless the king, save, Lord, give him success; but that he would make him a blessing to them, let the king hear us, when we call to him for justice and mercy. Those that would have good of their magistrates must thus pray for them, for they, as all other creatures, are that to us (and no more) than God makes them to be. Or, it may refer to the Messiah, that King, that King of kings; let him hear us when we call; let him come to us according to the promise in the time appointed; let him, as the great master of requests, receive all our petitions, and present them to his Father. But many interpreters give another reading of this verse, by altering the pause, *Lord, save the king, and hear us when we call;* and so it is a summary of the whole psalm and is taken into our English Liturgy, *O Lord, save the king, and mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.*

In singing these verses we should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

P S A L M XXI.

As the foregoing psalm was a prayer for the king, that God would protect and prosper him; so this is a thanksgiving for the success God had blessed him with. Those whom we have prayed for, we ought to give thanks for, and particularly for kings in whose prosperity we share. They are here taught, (1.) To congratulate his victories, and the honour he had achieved, *ver. 1—6.* (2.) To confide in the power of God for the completing of the ruin of the enemies of his kingdom, *ver. 7—13.* And in this there is an eye to the Messiah, the prince and the glory of his kingdom; for to him divers passages in this psalm are more applicable than to David himself.

¶ To the chief Musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **T**HE king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! 2. Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah. 3. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. 4. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. 5. His glory is great in thy salvation, honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. 6. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

David here speaks for himself in the first place, professing that his joy was in God's strength and in his salvation, and not in the strength or success of his armies. He also directs his subjects herein to rejoice with him, and to give God all the glory of the victories he had obtained, and all with an eye to Christ, of whose triumphs over the power of darkness David's victories were but shadows.

1. They here congratulate the king's joys, and concur with him in them, *ver. 1.* the king doth rejoice, he useth to rejoice in thy strength, and so do we; what pleaseth the king pleaseth us, *2 Sam. iii. 36.* Happy the people, the character of whose king it is, that he makes God's strength his confidence, and God's salvation his joy; that is pleased with all the advancements of God's kingdom, and trusts God to bear him out in all he doth for the service of it. Our Lord Jesus in his great undertaking relied upon help from heaven, and pleased himself with the prospect of that great salvation which he was thereby to work out.

Vol. II. No. LXXX.\*

2. They give God all the praise of those things which were the matter of their king's rejoicing.

1. That God had heard his praise, *ver. 2.* *Thou hast given him his heart's desire,* (and there is no prayer accepted but what is the heart's desire) the very thing they begged of God for him, *Psal. xi. 4.* Note, God's gracious returns of prayer do in a special manner require our humble returns of praise. When God gives to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, gives him to see his seed, and accepts his intercession for all believers, he gives him his heart's desire.

2. That God had surprised him with favours, and much outdone his expectations, *ver. 3.* *Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness.* All our blessings are blessings of goodness, and are owing not at all to and merit of ours, but purely and only to God's goodness. But the psalmist here reckons it in a special manner obliging, that these blessings were given in a preventing way; this fixed his eye, enlarged his soul, and endeared his God, as one expresseth it. When God's blessings come sooner and prove richer than we imagine, when they are given before we pray for them, before we were ready for them, nay, when we feared the contrary; then it may be truly said, that he prevented us with them. Nothing indeed prevented Christ, but to mankind never was any favour more preventing than our redemption by Christ, and all the blessed fruits of his mediation.

3. That God had advanced him to the highest honour and the most extensive power, *Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head,* and kept it here, when his enemies attempted to throw it off. Note, Crowns are at God's dispose; no head wears them but God sets them there, whether in judgment to his land or for mercy, the event will shew. On the head of Christ God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first, and then of glory.

4. That God had assured him of the perpetuity of his kingdom, and therein had done more for him than he was able either to ask or think, *ver. 4.* When he went forth upon a perilous expedition he asked his life of thee, which he then put into his hand, and thou not only gavest him that, but withal gavest him length of days for ever and ever; didst not only prolong his life far beyond his expectation, but didst assure him of a blessed immortality in a future state, and of the continuance of his kingdom in the Messiah that should come of his lions. See how God's grants often exceed our petitions and hopes, and infer from thence, how rich he is in mercy to those that call upon him. See also and rejoice in the length of the days of Christ's kingdom; he was dead indeed that we might live through him; but he is alive, and lives for evermore, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; and because he thus lives, we shall thus live also.

5. That God had advanced him to the highest honour and dignity, *ver. 5.* *His glory is great,* far transcending that of all the neighbouring princes in the salvation thou hast wrought for him and wrought by him. The glory which every good man is ambitious of, is to see the salvation of the Lord, honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him, as a burden which he must bear, as a charge which he must account for. Jesus Christ received from God the Father honour and glory, *2 Pet. i. 17.* The glory which he had with him before the worlds were, *John xvii. 5.* And on him is laid the charge of an universal government, and to him all power in heaven and earth is committed.

6. That God had given him the satisfaction of being the author of all bliss to mankind, *ver. 6.* *Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever,* (so the margin reads it) thou hast made him to be an universal, everlasting blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are and shall be blessed; and so thou hast made him exceeding glad with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking, and to him in the prosecution of it. See how the spirit of prophecy gradually riseth here to that which is peculiar to Christ, for none but he is blessed for ever, much less a blessing for ever to that eminency that the expression speaks: And of him it is said, that God made him full of joy with his countenance.

And in singing this we should rejoice in his joy, and triumph in his exaltation.

7. For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved. 8. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. 10. Their fruit shall thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. 11. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. 12. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings, against the face of them. 13. Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength; so will we sing and praise thy power.

The psalmist having taught his people to look back with joy and praise on what God had done for him and them; here teacheth them to look forward with faith, and hope and prayer, upon what God would further do for them. *The king rejoiceth in God, ver. 1.* and therefore we will be thankful; *the king trusteth in God, ver. 7.* therefore we will be encouraged. The joy and confidence of Christ our king, is the ground of all our joy and confidence.

1. They are confident of the stability of David's kingdom; *Through the mercy of the most High,* and not through his own merit or strength, *he shall not be moved.* His prosperous state shall not be disturbed, his faith and hope of God, which is the stay of his spirit, shall not be shaken. The mercy of the most High, the divine goodness, power and dominion, is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears. God being at Christ's right hand in his suffering, *Psal. xvi. 8,* and he being at God's right hand in his glory, we may be sure he shall not, he cannot be moved, but continueth for ever.

2. They are confident of the destruction of all the impenitent, implacable enemies of David's kingdom. The success with which God had blessed David's arms hitherto, was an earnest of the rest which God would give him from all his enemies round about; and a type of the total overthrow of all Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them. Observe, (1.) The description of his enemies: They are such as hate him, *ver. 8.* They hated David, because God had set him apart for himself; hated Christ, because they hated the light; but both were hated without any just cause, and in both God was hated, *John xv. 23—25.* (2.) The design of his enemies, *ver. 11.* *They intended evil against thee, and imagined a mischievous device;* they pretended to fight against David only, but their enmity



was against God himself. They that aimed to un-king David, aimed in effect to un-God Jehovah. What is devised and designed against religion, and against the instruments God raised up to support and advance it, is very evil and mischievous, and God takes it as devised and designed against himself, and will so reckon for it. (3.) The disappointment of them: They devise what they are not able to perform, ver. 11. Their malice is impotent, and they imagine a vain thing, Psalm ii. 1. (4.) The discovery of them, ver. 8. *Thy hand shall find them out*, though never so artfully disguised by the pretences and professions of friendship; though mingled with the faithful subjects of this kingdom, and hardly to be distinguished from them; though flying from justice, and absconding in their close places; yet thy hand shall find them out wherever they are. There is no escaping God's avenging eye, no going out of the reach of his hand: rocks and mountains will be no better shelter at last, than fig-leaves were at first. (5.) The destruction of them: It will be an utter destruction, Luke xix. 27. they shall be swallowed up and devoured, ver. 9. Hell, the portion of all Christ's enemies, is the complete misery both of body and soul. *Their fruit and their seed shall be destroyed*, ver. 10. The enemies of God's kingdom in every age shall fall under the same doom, and the whole generation of them will at last be rooted out, and all opposing rule, principality and power shall be put down. The arrows of God's wrath shall confound them and put them to flight, being levelled at the face of them, ver. 12. That will be the lot of daring enemies that face God. The fire of God's wrath will consume them, ver. 9. They shall not only be cast into a furnace of fire, Matt. xiii. 42. but he shall make them themselves as a fiery oven or furnace, they shall be their own tormentors, the reflections and terrors of their own consciences will be their hell. Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected him and fought against him, even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them to eternity a fiery oven to themselves: It is the worm that dies not.

3. In this confidence they beg of God, that he would still appear for his anointed, ver. 13. that he would act for him in his own strength, by the immediate operations of his power as Lord of hosts and Father of spirits, making little use of means and instruments. And (1.) Hereby he would exalt himself, and glorify his own name. We have but little strength, and are not so active for thee as we should be, which is our shame; Lord, take the work into thine own hands, do it without us, and it will be thy glory. (2.) Hereupon they would exalt him; so will we sing and praise thy power the more triumphantly. The less God has of our service when a deliverance is in the working, the more he must have of our praises when it is wrought without us.

# P S A L M XXII.

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, as clearly and fully as any where else in all the Old Testament, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. of him no doubt David here speaks, and not of himself or of any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament, all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. The providences of God concerning David were so very extraordinary, that we may suppose there were some wise and good men, who then could not but look upon him as a figure of him that was to come. But the composure of his psalms especially, in which he found himself wonderfully carried out by the spirit of prophecy, far beyond his own thought and intention, was (we may suppose) an abundant satisfaction to himself, that he was not only the father of the Messiah, but a figure of him. In this psalm he speaks, (1.) Of the humiliation of Christ, ver. 1—21. Where David, as a type of Christ, complains of the very calamitous condition he was in upon many accounts. (1.) He complains, and mixeth comforts with his complaints. Complains, ver. 1, 2. But comforts himself, ver. 3—5. Complains again, ver. 6—8. But comforts himself again, ver. 9—10. (2.) He complains and mixeth prayers with his complaints. Complains of the power and rage of his enemies, ver. 12, 13, 16, 18. Of his own bodily weakness and decay, ver. 14, 15—17. But prays that God would not be far from him, ver. 11—19. That he would save and deliver him, ver. 19—21. (2.) Of the exaltation of Christ, that his undertaking should be for the glory of God, ver. 22—25. For the salvation and joy of his people, ver. 26—29. And for the perpetuating of his own kingdom, ver. 30, 31. In singing this psalm, we must keep our thoughts fixed upon Christ, and be so affected with his sufferings, as to experience the fellowship of them, and so affected with his grace, as to experience the power and influence of it.

¶ To the chief musician upon Ajeleth Shabar.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **M**Y God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? 2. O my God, I cry in the day-time; but thou hearest not: and in the night season, and am not silent. 3. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. 4. Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. 6. But I am a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people. 7. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 8. He trusted on the LORD, that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. 9. But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's breasts. 10. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

Some think they find Christ in the title of this psalm upon Ajeleth Shabar, the hind of the morning; Christ is as the swift hind upon the mountains of spices, Cant. viii. 14. as the loving hind and the pleasant roe to all believers, Prov. v. 9. giveth goodly words like Naphtali, who is compared to a hind let loose, Gen. xlix. 21. He is the hind of the morning, marked out by the counsels of God from eternity, to be run down by those dogs that compassed him, ver. 16. But others think it notes only the tune to which the psalm was set.

In these verses we have,

A sad complaint of God's withdrawals, ver. 1, 2. This may be applied to David, or any other child of God, in the want of the tokens of his favours, and pressed with the burden of his displeasure, roaring under it, as one overwhelmed with grief and terror, and crying earnestly for relief, and in this case apprehending himself forsaken of God, unhelped, unheard, yet calling him again and again, my God, and continuing to cry day and night to him, and earnestly desiring his gracious returns. Note, 1. Spiritual desertions are the saints' sorest afflictions; when their evidences are clouded, divine consolations suspended, their communion with God interrupted, and the terrors of God set themselves in array against them, how sad are their spirits, and how sapless all their comforts? 2. Even their complaints of these burdens is a good sign of spiritual life, and spiritual senses exercised. To cry out, My God, why am I sick? why am I poor? would give cause to suspect discontent and wordliness. But, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* is the language of a heart binding up its happiness in God's favour. 3. When we are lamenting God's withdrawals, yet still we must call him our God, and continue to call upon him as ours. When we want the faith of assurance, we must live by a faith of adherence: However it be, yet God is good, and he is mine, and though he lay me, yet will I trust in him; though he do not answer me presently, I will continue praying and waiting; though he be silent, I will not be silent.

But it must be applied to Christ; for in the first words of this complaint he poured out his soul before God when he was upon the cross, *Matt. xxvii. 46.* probably he proceeded to the following words, and some think he repeated the whole psalm, if not aloud, because they cavilled at the first words, yet to himself. Note, 1. Christ in his sufferings cried earnestly to his Father, for his favour and presence with him; he cried in the day-time upon the cross, and in the night season, when he was in his agony in the garden; he offered up strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him, and with some fear too, *Heb. v. 7.* Yet God forsook him, was far from helping him, and did not hear him, and this was it which he complains of more than all his sufferings. God delivered him into the hands of his enemies; it was by his determinate counsel that he was crucified and slain, and he did not give in sensible comforts; but Christ having made himself sin for us, in conformity thereto, the Father laid him under the present impressions of his wrath and displeasure against sin. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief*, Isa. liii. 10. But even then he kept fast hold of his relation to his Father as his God, by whom he was now employed, whom he was now serving, and with whom he should shortly be glorified.

2. Encouragement taken in reference hereto, ver. 3, 4, 5. Though God did not hear him, did not help him; yet, (1.) He will think well of God: But thou art holy, not unjust or untrue, or unkind in any of thy dispensations: though thou dost not presently come into the relief of thine afflicted people, yet thou lovest them, art true to thy covenant with them, and dost not countenance the iniquity of their persecutors, *Hab. i. 13.* And as thou art infinitely pure and upright thyself, so thou delightest in the services of thine upright people: *Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel*, i. e. Thou art pleased to manifest thy glory and grace, and special presence with thy people, in the sanctuary where they attend thee with their praises; there thou art always ready to receive their homage, and of the tabernacle of meeting hast said, *This is my rest for ever.* This speaks God's wonderful condescension to his faithful worshippers, that though he is attended with the praises of angels, yet he is pleased to inhabit the praises of Israel. And it may comfort us in all our complaints, that though God seem for a while to turn a deaf ear to them, yet he is so pleased with his people's praises, that he will in due time give them cause to change their note; *Hope in God for I shall yet praise him.* Our Lord Jesus in his sufferings had an eye to the holiness of God; to preserve and advance the honour of that, and of his grace in inhabiting the praises of Israel, notwithstanding the iniquities of their holy things. (2.) He will take comfort from the experiences which the saints in former ages had of the benefit of faith and prayer, ver. 4, 5, *Our fathers trusted in thee, cried unto thee, and thou didst deliver them;* therefore thou wilt in due time deliver me, for never any that hoped in thee were made ashamed of their hope; never any that sought thee, sought thee in vain. And thou art still the same in thyself and the same to thy people that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are for the fathers' sake, Rom. xi. 28. The entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful: He that was our fathers' God must be ours, and therefore will be ours. Our Lord Jesus in his sufferings supported himself with this, and that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah and others, were in due time delivered, and were types of his exaltation too, therefore he knows he shall not be confounded, Isa. i. 7.

3. The complaint renewed of another grievance, and that is the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is nothing so bitter as that before of God's withdrawing: but as that touches a gracious soul, so this a generous soul, in a very tender part, ver. 6, 7, 8. Our fathers were honoured, the patriarchs in their day first or last appeared great in the eye of the world, Abraham, Moses, David; but Christ is a worm and no man. It was great condescension that he became man, a step downwards, that is and will be the wonder of angels; yet as it were too much, too great to be a man, he becomes a worm and no man. He was Adam, a mean man, and Enosh a man of sorrows, but so *Isa.* not a considerable man; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and *his visage was marred more than any man's*, Isa. li. 14. Man at the best is a worm; but he became a worm and no man. And if he had not made himself a worm, he could not have been trampled upon as he was. The word signifies such a worm as was used in dying, scarlet or purple: whence some make it an allusion to his bloody sufferings. See what abuses were put upon him; (1.) He was reproached as an ill man, as a blasphemer, a sabbath-breaker, a wine-bibber, a false prophet, an enemy to Caesar, a confederate with the prince of the devils. (2.) He was despised of the people, as a mean contemptible man, not worth taking notice of; his country in an ill-name, his relations poor mechanics, his followers none of the rulers of the Pharisees, but the mob. (3.) He was ridiculed as a foolish man, and one that not only deceived others, but himself too. They that saw him hanging on the cross, laughed him to scorn. So far were they from pitying him, or concerning themselves for him, that they added to his afflictions, with all the gestures and expressions of insolence, upbraiding him with his fall: they make mouths at him, make merry over him, and make a jest at his sufferings; they shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, this was he that said he trusted God would deliver him; now let him deliver him. David was sometimes taunted for his confidence in God; but in the sufferings of Christ, this was literally and exactly fulfilled; those very gestures were used by those that reviled him, *Matt. xxvii. 39.* they wagged their heads, nay, and so far did their malice make them forget themselves, that they used the very words, ver. 43, *He trusted in God let him deliver him.* Our Lord Jesus having undertaken to satisfy for the dishonour we had done to God by our sins, did it by submitting to the highest instance of ignominy and disgrace that could be.

4. Encouragement



4. Encouragement taken as to this also, ver. 9, 10. Men despise me; but thou art he that took me out of the womb. David and other good men have often, for direction to us, encouraged themselves with this; that God had not only been the God of their fathers, as before, ver. 1. but the God of their infancy, who began betimes to take care of them, as soon as they had a being, and therefore they hope will never cast them off. Ho that did so well for us in that helpless, useless state, will not leave us when he has reared us and nursed us up into some capacity of serving him. See the early instances of God's providential care for us, (1.) In the birth: he took us also out of the womb, else we had died there, or been stifled in the birth. Every man's particular time begins with this pregnant proof of God's providence; as time in general began with the creation, that pregnant proof of his being. (1.) At the breast; then didst thou make me hope, i. e. Thou didst that for me, in providing sustenance for me, and protecting me from the dangers to which I was exposed, which encourages me to hope in thee all my days. The blessings of the breasts, as they crown the blessings of the womb, so they are earnest of the blessings of our whole lives; surely he that fed us then, will never starve us, Job iii. 12. (3.) In our early dedication to him: I was cast upon thee from the womb. Which perhaps refers to his circumcision on the eighth day; he was then by his parents committed and given up to God as his God in covenant; for circumcision was a seal of the covenant; and this encouraged him to trust in God. Those have reason to think themselves safe, who were so soon solemnly gathered under the wings of the divine Majesty. (4.) In the experience we have had of God's goodness to us all along ever since, drawn out in a constant, uninterrupted series of preservations and supplies: thou art my God, providing for me and watching over me for good, from my mother's belly, i. e. from my coming into the world unto this day. And if as soon as we become capable of acting reason, we put our confidence in God, and commit ourselves and our way to him, we need not doubt but he will always remember the kindness of our youth and the love of our espousals, Jer. ii. 2. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, over whose incarnation and birth the divine providence watched with a peculiar care, when he was born in a stable, laid in a manger, and immediately exposed to the malice of Herod, and forced to flee into Egypt; when he was a child God loved him and called him thence, Hos. xi. 1. and the remembrance of this comforted him in his sufferings; men reproached him and discouraged his confidence in God; but God had honoured him; and encouraged his confidence in him.

11. Be not far from, for trouble is near: for there is none to help. 12. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. 13. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. 14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. 15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. 16. For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17. I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. 18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. 19. But be not thou far from me, O LORD; O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20. Deliver my soul from the sword: my darling from the power of the dog. 21. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

In these verses we have Christ suffering, and Christ praying: by which we are directed to look for crosses, to look up to God under them.

1. Here is Christ suffering; David indeed was often in trouble, and beset with enemies; but many of the particulars here instanced in are such as were never true of David, and therefore must be appropriated to Christ in the depth of his humiliation.

(1.) He is here deserted by his friends; trouble and distress is near, and there is none to help, none to uphold, ver. 11. He trod the wine-press alone; for all his disciples forsook him and fled. It is God's honour to help, when all other helps and succours fail.

(2.) He is here insulted and surrounded by his enemies, such as were of the higher rank, who for their strength and fury are compared to bulls, strong bulls of Bashan, ver. 12. fat and fed to the full, haughty and stout; such were the chief priests and elders that persecuted Christ; and others of a lower rank, who are compared to the dogs, ver. 16. filthy and greedy, and unwearied in running him down. There is an assembly of the wicked plotting against him, ver. 16. For the chief priests sat in counsel to consult ways and means to take Christ. These enemies were numerous and unanimous; many, and those of different and clashing interests among themselves, as Herod and Pilate, yet have agreed to compass me. They have carried their plot far, and seemed to have gained their point, for they have beset me round, ver. 12. They have inclosed me, ver. 10. They are formidable and threatening, ver. 13. They gaped upon me with their mouths, to show me that they would swallow me up; and this with as much strength and fierceness as a roaring ravening lion leaps upon his prey.

(3.) He is here crucified: the very manner of his death is described, though never in use among the Jews; they pierced my hands and my feet, ver. 16. which were nailed to the accursed tree, and the whole body left to hang, the effect of which must needs be the most exquisite pain and torture. There is no one passage in all the Old Testament, which the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this, because it is such an eminent prediction of the death of Christ, and was so exactly fulfilled.

(4.) He is here dying, ver. 14, 15. dying in pain and anguish, because he was to satisfy for sin, which brought in pain, and for which we must otherwise have lain in everlasting anguish. Here is, (1.) The dissolution of the whole frame of his body: I am poured out like water, weak as water, and yielding to the power of death, emptying himself of all the supports of his human nature.

(2.) The dislocation of his bones; care was taken that not one of them should be broken, John xix. 36. but they were all out of joint by the violent stretching of his body upon the cross as upon a rack. Or it may note the fear that seized him in his agony in the garden, when he began to be sore amazed; the effect of which perhaps was (as sometimes it has been of great fear, Dan. vi. 6.) That the joints of his loins were loosed, and his

knees smote one against another. His bones were put out of joint, that he might put the whole creation into joint again, which sin had put out of joint, and might make our broken bones to rejoice. (3.) The colligation of his spirits: my heart is like wax, melted to receive the impressions of God's wrath against the sins he undertook to satisfy for; melting away like the vitals of a dying man; which as it is satisfied for the hardness of our hearts, so the consideration of it should help to soften them. When Job speaks of his inward trouble, he saith, The Almighty makes my heart soft, Job xxiii. 16. And see Psal. lxxiii. 2. (4.) The failing of his natural force: my strength is dried up; so that he became parched and brittle like a potsherd, the radical moisture being wasted by the fire of divine wrath preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand before God's anger? or who knows the power of it? If this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (5.) The clamminess of his mouth, an usual symptom of approaching death; my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; this was fulfilled both in his thirst upon the cross, John xix. 28. and in his silence under his sufferings; for as sheep before the shearers are dumb, so opened he not his mouth, nor objected against any thing done to him. (6.) His giving up the ghost: thou hast brought me to the dust of death, i. e. I am just ready to drop into the grave: for nothing less would satisfy divine justice. The life of the sinner was forfeited, and therefore the life of the sacrifice must be the ransom for it. The sentence of death passed upon Adam was thus expressed, unto dust shalt thou return. And therefore Christ having an eye to that sentence in his obedience to death, here useth a like expression, thou hast brought me to the dust of death.

(5.) He was stripped: the shame of nakedness was the immediate consequence of sin; and therefore our Lord Jesus was stripped of his clothes when he was crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of his righteousness, and that the shame of our nakedness might not appear. Now here we are told, (1.) How his body looked when it was thus stripped; I may tell all my bones, ver. 17. His blessed body was lean and emaciated with labour, grief, and fasting during the whole course of his ministry, which made him look as if he was near fifty years old when he was yet but thirty-three; as we find John viii. 57. His wrinkles now witnessed for him, that he was far from being what he was called, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. Or his bones might be numbered, because his body was distended upon the cross, which made it easy to count his ribs. They look and stare upon me, i. e. my bones do, being distorted and having no flesh to cover them, as Job saith, chap. xvi. 8. My leanness rising up in me, beareth witness to my face. Or the standers by, the passers by, are amazed to see my bones start out thus: and instead of pitying me, are pleased even with such a rueful spectacle. (2.) What they did with his clothes, which they took from him, ver. 18. They part my garments among them, to every soldier a part, and upon my vesture, the seamless coat, do they cast lots. This very circumstance was exactly fulfilled, John xix. 23, 24. And though it was no great instance of Christ's sufferings, yet it is a great instance of the fulfilling of the scripture in him. Thus it was written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer. Let us therefore confirm our faith in him as the true Messiah, and inflame our love to him as the best of friends, who loved us, and suffered all this for us.

2. Here is Christ praying, and with that supporting himself under the burden of his sufferings; Christ in his agony prayed, prayed earnestly, prayed that the cup might pass from him; when the prince of this world with his terrors set upon him, gaped upon him as a roaring lion, he fell upon the ground and prayed. And of that David's praying here was a type. He calls God his strength, ver. 19. When we cannot rejoice in God as our song, yet let us stay ourselves upon him as our strength; and take the comforts of spiritual supports, when we cannot come at spiritual delights. He prays, (1.) That God would be with him, and not set himself at a distance from him: be not thou far from me, ver. 11. and again, ver. 19. Whoever stands aloof from my force, Lord, do not thou. The nearness of trouble should quicken us to draw near to God, and then we may hope that he will draw near to us. (2.) That he would help him, and make haste to help him; help him to bear up under his troubles, that he might not fail nor be discouraged, that he might neither shrink from his undertaking, nor sink under it. And the Father heard him in that he feared, Heb. v. 7. and enabled him to go through with his work. (3.) That he would deliver him, and save him, ver. 20, 21. (1.) Observe, What the jewel is which he is in care for, the safety of my soul, my darling, let that be redeemed from the power of the grave, Psal. xlv. 15. Father, into thy hands I commit that, to be conveyed safe to paradise. The Psalmist here calls his soul his darling, his only one, so the word is: My soul is my only one. I have but one soul to take care of, and therefore the greater is my shame if I neglect it: and the greater will the loss be if I let it perish. Being my only one it ought to be my darling, for the eternal welfare of which I ought to be deeply concerned. I do not use my soul as my darling, unless I take care to preserve it from every thing that would hurt it, and to provide all necessaries for it, and be entirely tender of its welfare. (2.) Observe, What the danger is from which he prays to be delivered, from the sword, the flaming sword of divine wrath, which turns every way. This he dreaded more than any thing, Gen. iii. 24. God's anger was the wormwood and the gall in the bitter cup that was put into his hands, O deliver my soul from that: Lord, though I lose my life, let me not lose thy love. Save me from the power of the dog, and from the lion's mouth. This seems to be meant of Satan that old enemy, that bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, the prince of this world, with whom he was to engage in close combat, and whom he saw coming, John xiv. 30. Lord, save me from being overpowered by his terrors. He pleads, thou hast formerly heard me from the horn of the unicorn, i. e. saved me from him in answer to my prayer. Which may refer to the victory Christ had obtained over Satan and his temptations, Matt. iv. when the devil left him for a season, Luke iv. 13. but now returned in another manner to attack him with his terrors. Lord, thou gavest me the victory then, give it me now, that I may spoil principalities and powers, and cast out the prince of this world. Has God delivered us from the horns of the unicorn, that we be not tossed? Let that encourage us to hope that we shall be delivered from the lion's mouth, that we be not torn. He that has delivered, doth and will. This prayer of Christ, no doubt, was answered, for the Father heard him always. And though he did not deliver him from death, yet he suffered him not to see corruption, but the third day raised him out of the dust of death; which was a greater instance of God's favour to him, than if he had helped him down from the cross: for that would have baulked his undertaking, whereas his resurrection crowned it.

In singing this we should meditate on the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, till we experience in our own souls the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.

22. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. 23. Ye that fear thee, LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify



glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. 24. For he hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him he heard. 25. My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. 26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him, your heart shall live for ever. 27. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. 28. For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations. 29. All they that be fat upon the earth, shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust, shall bow before him, and none can keep alive his own soul. 30. A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation. 31. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

The same that began the psalm complaining, who was no other than Christ in his humiliation, ends it here triumphing, and it can be no other than Christ in his exaltation. And as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to him, *Heb. ii. 12.* and are made his own words: *I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.* The certain prospect which Christ had of the joy set before them, not only gave him a satisfactory answer to his prayers, but turned his complaints into praises; he saw of the travail of his soul and was well satisfied, witness that triumphant word wherewith he breathed his last; *It is finished.*

Five things are here spoken of, the view of which were the satisfaction and triumph of Christ in his sufferings.

1. That he should have a church in the world; and those that were given him from eternity should in the fulness of time be gathered in to him. This is implied here; that he should see his seed, *Isa. liii. 10.* It pleased him to think, (1.) That by the declaring of God's name, *i. e.* by the preaching of the everlasting gospel in its plainness and purity, many should be effectually called to him, and to God by him. And for this end ministers should be employed to publish this doctrine to the world, who should be so much his messengers and his voice, that their doing it should be accounted his doing it; their word is his, and by them he declares God's name. (2.) That those who are thus called in should be brought into a very near and dear relation to him as brethren; for he is not only not ashamed, but greatly well pleased to call them so: not the believing Jews only his countrymen, but those of the Gentiles also, who become fellow-heirs and of the same body, *Heb. ii. 11.* Christ is our elder brother, who takes care of us, and makes provision for us, and expects that our desire should be towards him, and that we be willing he should rule over us. (3.) That these brethren of his should be incorporated into a congregation, a great congregation, such is the universal church, the whole family that is named from him, into which all the children of God that were scattered abroad are collected, and in which they are united, *John xi. 52. Eph. i. 10.* And that they should also be incorporated into lesser societies, members of that great body, many religious assemblies for divine worship, on which the face of christianity should appear, and in which the interests of it should be supported and advanced. (4.) That these should be accounted the seed of Jacob and Israel, *ver. 23.* That on them, though Gentiles, the blessing of Abraham might come, *Gal. iii. 14.* and to them might pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenant, and the service of God, as much as ever it did to Israel according to the flesh, *Rom. ix. 4. Heb. viii. 10.* The gospel-church is called the Israel of God, *Gal. vi. 6.*

2. That God should be greatly honoured and glorified in him by that church. His Father's glory was that which he had in his eye throughout his whole undertaking, *John xvii. 4.* particularly in his sufferings, which he entered upon with this solemn request, *Father, glorify thy name,* *John xii. 27, 28.* He foresees with pleasure,

(1.) That God would be glorified by the church that should be gathered to him; and for that end they should be called and gathered in, that they might be unto God for a name and a praise. Christ by his ministers will declare God's name to his brethren, as God's mouth to them, and then by them, as the mouth of the congregation to God, will God's name be praised. All that fear the Lord will praise him, *ver. 23.* even every Israelite indeed. See *Psal. cxiii. 2, 3, 4.—cxxy. 19, 20.* The business of christians, particularly in their solemn religious assemblies, is to praise and glorify God, with a holy awe and reverence of his majesty; and therefore they that are here called upon to praise God, are called upon to fear him.

(2.) That God would be glorified in the Redeemer and in his undertaking. Therefore Christ is said to praise God in the church, not only because he is a master of the assemblies in which God is praised, and the mediator of all the praises that are offered up to God, but because he is the matter of the church's praise. See *Eph. iii. 21.* All our praises must center in the work of redemption, and a great deal of reason we have to be thankful, (1.) That Jesus Christ was owned by his Father in his undertaking, notwithstanding the apprehension he was sometimes under that his Father had forsaken him, *ver. 21. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted One, i. e.* of the suffering Redeemer; but has graciously accepted it as a full satisfaction for sin, and a valuable consideration on which ground to grant the grant of eternal life to all believers. Though it was offered to us poor sinners, he did not despise it or abhor it for our sakes, nor did he turn his face from him that offered it, as Saul was angry with his own son, because he interceded for David, whom he looked upon as his enemy. But when he cried unto him, when his blood cried for peace and pardon for us, he heard him. This as it is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be matter of our thanksgiving. Those who have thought their prayers slighted and unheard, yet if they continue to pray and wait, will find they have not sought in vain. (2.) That he himself will go on with his undertaking and complete it. Christ saith, *I will pay my vows, ver. 25.* Having engaged to bring many sons to glory, he will perform his engagement to the utmost, and will lose none.

3. That all humble gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him, *ver. 26.* It comforted the Lord Jesus in his sufferings, that in and through him all true believers should have everlasting consolation.

(1.) The poor in spirit shall be rich in blessings, spiritual blessings; the hungry shall be filled with good things. Christ's sacrifice being accepted, the saints shall feed upon the sacrifice, as under the law upon the peace-offerings, and so partake of the altar. *The meek shall eat and be satisfied;* eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ's mediation; which is meat and drink to the soul that knows its own nature and ease. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ, shall have all they can desire to satisfy them and make them easy, and shall not labour as they have done for that which satisfieth not. (2.) They that are much in praying shall be much in thanksgiving. *They shall praise the Lord that seek him,* because through Christ they are sure of finding him; in the hopes of which they have reason to praise him; even while they are seeking him: and the more earnest they are in seeking him, the more will their hearts be enlarged in his praises when they have found him. (3.) The souls that are devoted to him shall be for ever happy with him: *your hearts shall live for ever.* Yours that are meek; that are satisfied in Christ, that continue to seek God, whatever becomes of your bodies, *your hearts shall live for ever;* the graces and comforts you have shall be perfected in everlasting life. Christ has said, *because I live you shall live also,* *John xiv. 19.* and therefore that life shall be as sure and as long as his.

4. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend itself to all corners of the earth, and should take in all sorts of people.

(1.) That it should reach far, *ver. 27, 28.* That whereas the Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now all the ends of the world should come into the church, and the partition wall being taken down, the Gentiles should be taken in. It is here prophesied, (1.) That they should be converted, they shall remember and turn to the Lord. Note, Serious reflection is the first step, and a good step it is towards true conversion. We must consider and turn. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father. (2.) That then they should be admitted into communion with God, and with the assemblies that serve him: *They shall worship before thee, for in every place incense shall be offered to God,* *Mat. i. 11. Isa. lxi. 23.* Those that turn to God will make conscience of worshipping before him. And good reason there is why all the kindreds of the nations should do homage to God, *for ver. 28. The kingdom is the Lord's;* his, and his only, is the universal monarchy. (1.) The kingdom of nature is the Lord Jehovah's, and his providence rules among the nations, and upon that account we are bound to worship him. So that the design of the christian religion is to revive natural religion, and the principles and laws of it. Christ died to bring us to God, the God that made us, from whom we had revolted, and reduce us to our native allegiance. (2.) The kingdom of grace is the Lord Christ's, and he, as mediator, is appointed governor among the nations; head over all things to his church. Let every tongue therefore confess that he is Lord.

(2.) That it should include many of different ranks, *ver. 29.* High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, meet in Christ. (1.) Christ shall have the homage of many of the great ones, they that be fat upon earth, that live in pomp and power, they shall eat and worship: even they that fare deliciously, when they have eaten and are full, shall bless the Lord their God for their plenty and prosperity. (2.) The poor also shall receive his gospel. Those that go down to the dust, that sit in the dust, *Psalm cxiii. 7.* that can scarce keep life and soul together, they shall bow before the Lord Jesus, who reckons it his honour to be the poor man's king, *Psalm lxxii. 12.* and whose protection doth in a special manner draw their allegiance. Or this may be understood in general of dying men, whether poor or rich. See then what is our condition, we are going down to the dust to which we are sentenced, and where shortly we must make our bed. Nor can we keep alive our own souls, we cannot secure our own natural life long, nor can we be the authors of our own spiritual and eternal life. It is therefore our great interest, as well as duty, to bow before the Lord Jesus, to give up ourselves to him to be his subjects and worshippers; for this is the only way, and it is a sure way to secure our happiness when we go down to the dust. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom, by an obedient faith, to commit ourselves to Jesus Christ, who is able to save them and keep them alive for ever.

5. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, shall continue to the end, through all the ages of time. Mankind is kept up in a succession of generation; so that there is always a generation passing away, and a generation coming up. Now as Christ shall have honour from that which is passing away and leaving the world, *ver. 29.* they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and it is good to die bowing before Christ; blessed are the dead who thus die in the Lord; so he shall have honour from that which is rising up and setting out in the world, *ver. 30.* Observe,

1. Their application to Christ: *A seed shall serve him, i. e.* shall keep up the solemn worship of him, and profess and practice obedience to him as their Master and Lord. Note, God will have a church in the world to the end of time: and in order to that, there shall be a succession of professing christians and gospel ministers, from generation to generation. *A seed shall serve him, i. e.* There shall be a remnant more or less, to whom shall pertain the service of God, and to whom God will give grace to serve him; perhaps not the seed of the same persons, for grace doth not run in a blood, he doth not say their seed, but a seed; perhaps but few, yet enough to preserve the entail.

2. Christ's acknowledgment of them: *They shall be accounted to him as a generation, i. e.* He will be the same to them that he was to those who went before them; his kindness to his friends shall not die with them, but shall be drawn out to their heirs and successors, and instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom all shall acknowledge to be a seed that the Lord hath blessed, *Isa. lxi. 9.—lxv. 23.* The generation of the righteous God will graciously own as his treasure, his children.

3. Their agency for him, *ver. 31.* *They shall come,* shall rise up in their day, not only to keep up the virtue of the generation that is past, and to do the work of their own generation, but to serve the honour of Christ and the welfare of souls in the generation to come; they shall transmit to them the gospel of Christ (that sacred depositum) pure and entire, even to a people that shall be born hereafter; to them they shall declare two things, (1.) That there is an everlasting righteousness which Jesus Christ hath brought in. This righteousness of his, and not any of our own, they shall declare to be the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our joys. See *Rom. i. 16, 17.* (2.) That the work of our redemption by Christ is the Lord's own doing, (*Psalm cxviii. 23.*) and no contrivance of ours. This we must declare to our children, that God has done this: it is his wisdom in a mystery; it is his arm revealed.

In singing this we must triumph in the name of Christ, as above every name; must give him honour ourselves; rejoice in the honours others do him, and in the assurance we have that there shall be a people praising him on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.



P S A L M XXIII.

Many of David's psalms are full of complaints, but this is full of comforts, and the expressions of delight in God's great goodness, and dependence upon him. It is a psalm which has been sung by good Christians, and will be while the world stands, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. (1.) The psalmist here claims relation to God as his shepherd, ver. 1. (2.) He recounts his experience of the things God had done for him as his shepherd, ver. 2, 3, 5. (3.) From hence he infers, that he shall want no good, ver. 1. That he needed to fear no evil, ver. 4. That he would never leave or forsake him in a way of mercy; and therefore he resolves never to leave or forsake God in a way of duty, ver. 6. And in this certainly he has an eye, not only to the blessings of God's providence, which made his outward condition prosperous, but to the communications of God's grace, received by a lively faith, and returned in a warm devotion, which fills his soul with joy unspeakable. And as in the foregoing psalm he represented Christ dying for his sheep, so here he represents Christians receiving the benefit of all the care and tenderness of that great and good shepherd.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **THE LORD** is my shepherd, I shall not want. 2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

From three very comfortable premises, David in this psalm draws three very comfortable conclusions, and teaches us to do so too. We are saved, saved by hope, and therefore that hope will not make us ashamed, because it is well grounded. It is the duty of Christians to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and we are here directed to take that encouragement both from the relation wherein he stands to us, and from the experience we have had of his goodness according to that relation.

1. From God's being his shepherd, he infers that he shall not want any thing that is good for him, ver. 1. See here,

(1.) The great care that God takes of believers; he is their shepherd, and they may call him so. Time was when David was himself a shepherd; he was taken from following the ewes great with young, *Psalm lxxviii. 70.* and so he knew by experience the cares and tender affections of a good shepherd towards his flock. He remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them to have one that was skilful and faithful; he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this therefore he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Saviour seems to refer, when he saith, *I am the shepherd of the sheep; the good shepherd*, John x. 11. He that is the shepherd of Israel, i. e. of the whole church in general, *Psalm lxxx. 1.* is the shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognisance, *Isa. xl. 11.* He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them, protects them, and provides for them, with more care and constancy than a shepherd can, that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God be as a shepherd to us, we must be as sheep, inoffensive, meek and quiet, silent before the sheers, nay and before the butcher too; useful and sociable, we must know the shepherd's voice and follow him.

(2.) The great confidence which believers have in God; If the Lord is my shepherd, my feeder, I may conclude I shall not want any thing that is really necessary and good for me. If David penned this psalm before his coming to the crown, though destined to it, he had as much reason to fear wanting as any man. Once he sent his men a begging for him to Nabal, and another time went himself a begging to Abimelech; and yet when he considers that God is his shepherd, he can boldly say; *I shall not want.* Let not those fears flaring that are at God's finding, and have him for their feeder. More is implied than is expressed; not only, *I shall not want.* but I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me, or not good for me, or I shall have it in due time.

2. From his performing the office of a good shepherd to him he infers, that he needs not fear any evil in the greatest dangers and difficulties he could be in, ver. 2, 3, 4. He experiences the benefit of God's presence with him, and care of him now, and therefore expects the benefits of them when he most needs it. See here,

(1.) The comforts of a living saint; God is his shepherd, and he is to him a God. All sufficient to all intents and purposes: David found him so, and so have we. See the happiness of the saints, as the sheep of God's pasture.

(1.) They are well placed, well laid: *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.* We have the supports and comforts of this life from God's good hand, our daily bread from him as our Father. The greatest abundance is but dry pasture to a wicked man, who relisheth that only in it which pleaseth the senses; but to a godly man, who tasteth the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, and by faith relisheth that, though he has but little of the world, it is to him a green pasture, *Psalm xxxviii. 16. Prov. xv. 16, 17.* God's ordinances are the green pastures in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. It is milk for babes, pasture for the sheep, never barren, never eaten bare, never parched, but always a green pasture for faith to feed in. God makes his saints to lie down, i. e. he gives them quiet and contentment in their own minds, whatever their lot is; their souls dwell at ease in him, and that makes every pasture green. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances? let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us lie down in them, abide in them; this is my rest for ever. It is by a constancy of the means of grace that the soul is fed.

(2.) They are well guided, well led, the shepherd of Israel guideth Joseph like a flock; and every believer is under the same conduct. *He leadeth me beside the still waters.* Those that feed on God's goodness must follow his direction; he leads them by his providence, by his word, by his spirit; disposeth their affairs for the best, according to his counsel; disposeth their affections and actions according to his command; directs their eye, their way, and their heart into his love. The still waters by which he leads them, yield them not only a pleasant prospect, but many a cooling draught, many a

reviving cordial, when they are thirsty and weary. God provides for his people not only food and rest, but refreshment also and pleasure. The consolations of God, the joys of the Holy Ghost, are these still waters by which the saints are led; streams which flow from the fountain of living waters, and make glad the city of our God. God leads his people, not to the standing waters which corrupt and gather filth; not to the troubled sea, not to the rapid rolling floods; but to the silent purling waters; for the still, but running waters, agree best with those spirits that flow out towards God, and yet do it silently. This divine conduct they are under is stripped of its metaphor, ver. 3. *He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, i. e.* in the way of my duty, in that he instructs me by his word; and directs me by conscience and providence. These are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led and kept, and never to turn aside out of them. And those only are led by the still waters of comfort, that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way. It is the work of righteousness that is peace. In these paths we cannot walk, unless God both lead us into them, and lead us in them.

(3.) They are well helped when any thing ails them: He restoreth my soul, i. e. (1.) He reduceth me when I wander. No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt it is to go astray, and then so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to go astray like lost sheep, *Psalm cxix. 179.* they miss their way, and turn aside into by-paths; but when God shews them their error, gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, he restoreth the soul: and if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly and be undone. When after one sin David's heart smote him, and after another Nathan was sent to tell him, Thou art the man, God restored his soul. Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. (2.) He recovereth me when I am sick, and revives me when I am faint, and so restores the soul which was ready to depart. He is the Lord our God that healeth us, *Exod. xv. 26.* Many a time we had fainted, unless we had believed; and it was the good shepherd that kept us from fainting.

(2.) See here the courage of a dying saint, ver. 4. Having had such experience of God's goodness to me all my days, in six troubles and in seven, I will never distrust him, no, not in the last extremity; the rather, because all he has done for me hitherto was not for any merit or desert of mine, but purely for his name's sake, in pursuance of his word, in performance of his promise, and for the glory of his attributes, and relations to his people. That name therefore shall still be my strong tower, and shall assure me, that he that has led me and fed me all my life long, will not leave me at last.

Here is, (1.) Imminent danger supposed; *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, i. e.* Though I am in peril of death, though in the midst of dangers, deep as a valley, dark as a shadow, and dreadful as death itself; or rather, though I am under the arrests of death, have received the sentence of death within myself, and have all the reasons in the world to look upon myself as a dying man; yet I am easy. Those that are sick, those that are old, have reason to look upon themselves as in the valley of the shadow of death. Here is one word indeed which sounds terrible; it is, death which we must all count upon, there is no discharge in that war. But even in the supposition of the distress there are four words which lessen the terror. It is death indeed that is before us; but, (1.) It is but the shadow of death, there is no substantial evil in it; the shadow of a serpent will not sting, nor the shadow of a sword kill. (2.) It is the valley of the shadow, deep indeed, and dark and dirty, but the valleys are fruitful; and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people. (3.) It is but a walk in this valley, a gentle pleasant walk; the wicked are chased out of the world, and their souls are required, but the saints take a walk to another world as cheerfully as they take their leave of this. (4.) It is a walk through it, they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safe to the mountain of spices on the other side of it.

(2.) The danger made light of, and triumphed over upon good grounds. Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep of Christ; they tremble at it no more than sheep do that are appointed for the slaughter. Even in the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, none of these things move me. Note, A child of God may meet the messengers of death, and receive its summons with a holy security and serenity of mind. The sucking child may play upon the hole of this asp; and the weaned child, that through grace is weaned from this world, may put his hand upon this cockatrice's den, bidding a holy defiance to death, as Paul, *O death, where is thy sting!* And there is ground enough for his confidence. (1.) Because there is no evil in it to a child of God; death cannot separate us from the love of God, and therefore it can do us no real harm; it kills the body, but cannot touch the soul. And what needs it be dreadful, when there is nothing in it hurtful?

(2.) Because the saints have God's gracious presence with them in their dying moments; he is then at their right hand, and therefore what need they be moved? The good shepherd will not only conduct, but convey his sheep through this valley, where they are in danger of being set upon by the beasts of prey, the evening wolves; he will not only convey them, but comfort them then when they need most comfort. His presence shall comfort them, *Thou art with me.* His word and spirit shall comfort them; his rod and staff, alluding to the shepherd's crook or the rod under which the sheep passed when they were counted, *Lev. xxvii. 32.* or the staff with which the shepherds drove away the dogs that would scatter or worry the sheep. It is a comfort to the saints when they come to die that God takes cognisance of them; he knows them that they are his; that he will rebuke the enemy; that he will guide them with his rod, and sustain them with his staff. The gospel is called *the rod of Christ's strength*, *Psalm cx. 2.* and there is enough in that to comfort the saints when they come to die, and underneath them are the everlasting arms.

3. From the good gifts of God's bounty to him now, he infers the constancy and perpetuity of his mercy, ver. 5, 6. Where we may observe,

1. How highly he magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him, ver. 5. *Thou preparest a table before me;* thou hast provided for me all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things requisite both for body and soul, for time and eternity, such a bountiful benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness, as David here, who acknowledgeth, (1.) That he had food convenient: a table spread, a cup filled, meat for his hunger, drink for his thirst. (2.) That he had it carefully and readily provided for him: his table was not spread with any thing that came next to hand, but prepared, and prepared before him. (3.) That he was not stinted, was not straitened, but had abundance, *my cup runs over:* enough for myself and my friends too. (4.) That he had not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight: *Thou anointest my head with oil.* Samuel anointed him king, which was a certain pledge of further favour; but this is rather an instance of the plenty with which God had blessed him; or an allusion to the extraordinary entertainment of special friends whose heads they anointed with oil, *Luke vii. 46.* Nay, some think he still looks upon himself as a sheep, but such a one as the poor man's ewe lamb, *2 Sam. xii. 3.* that did eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in his bosom; not only thus nobly, but thus tenderly are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made



for their bodies, for their souls, for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. If providence do not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it be not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

2. How confidently he counts upon the continuance of God's favour, *ver. 6.* He had said, *ver. 1. I shall not want*; but now he speaks more positively, more comprehensively, *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* His hope riseth, and his faith strengthened by being acted. Observe. (1.) What he promiseth himself, goodness and mercy, i. e. all the streams of it flowing from the fountain: pardoning mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining mercy, supplying mercy. (2.) The manner of the conveyance of it: it shall follow me, as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; it shall follow them into all places and all conditions, shall be always ready to them. (3.) The continuance of it: it shall follow me all my life long, even to the last; for whom God loves, he loves to the end. (4.) The constancy of it: All the days of my life, as duty as the day comes; it shall be now every morning, *Lam. iii. 22, 23.* like the manna that was given to the Israelites daily. (5.) The certainty of it: Surely it shall. It is as sure as the promise of the God of truth can make it; and we know whom we have believed. (6.) Here is a prospect of the perfection of bliss in the future state. So some take the latter clause: goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life on this earth, when that is ended, I shall remove to a better world, to dwell in the *House of the Lord for ever*, in our Father's house above, where there are many mansions. *With what I have I am pleased much; with what I hope for, more.* All this, and heaven too! Then we serve a good master.

3. How resolutely he determines to cleave to God and to his duty. We read the last clause as David's covenant with God; *I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever*, i. e. as long as I live, and I will praise him while I have any being. We must dwell in his house as servants, that desired to have their ears bored to his door-post, to serve him for ever. If God's goodness to us be like the morning light, which shines more and more to the perfect day: let not ours to him be like the morning cloud, and the early dew that passeth away. Those that would be satisfied with the fatness of God's house, must keep close to the duties of it.

P S A L M XXIV.

This psalm is concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ. (1.) His providential kingdom, by which he rules the world, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) The kingdom of his grace, by which he rules in his church. 1. Concerning the subjects of that kingdom: their character, *ver. 4, 5, 7.* Their charter, *ver. 8.* 5. Concerning the King of that kingdom: and a summons to all to give him admission, *ver. 7-10.* It is supposed, that this psalm was penned upon occasion of David's bringing up the ark to the place prepared for it; and the intention of it was, to lead the people above the pomp and external ceremonies to a holy life and faith in Christ, of whom the ark was a type.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. THE earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein.  
2. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Here is. 1. God's absolute property in this part of the creation where our lot is cast, *ver. 1.* We are not to think that the heavens, even the heavens only, are the Lord's, and the numerous and bright inhabitants of the upper world, and that this earth being so small and inconsiderable a part of the creation, and at such a distance from the royal palace above, is neglected, and that he claims no interest in it; No, even the earth is his, and this lower world: and though he has prepared the throne of his glory in the heavens, yet his kingdom ruleth over all, and even the worms of this earth are not below his cognisance, nor from under his dominion.

(1.) When God gave the earth to the children of men, He still reserved to himself the property, and only let it out to them as tenants or usufructuaries: *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*; the mines that are lodged in the bowels of it, even the richest; the fruits it produceth; all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; our lands and houses, and all the improvements that are made of this earth by the skill and industry of man, they are all his. These indeed in the kingdom of grace are justly looked upon as emptiness; for they are vanity of vanities, nothing to a soul; but in the kingdom of providence they are fulness. *The earth is full of God's riches, so is the great and wide sea also.* All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand; so that wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he doth not go off his father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its products, is but lent to us, it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world, is not so against his claims. That which is most remote from us, as that which passeth through the paths of the sea, or is hid in the bottom of it, is the Lord's, and he knows where to find it.

(2.) The habitable part of this earth is his in a special manner, *Prov. viii. 31. The world, and they that dwell therein.* We ourselves are not our own, our bodies, our souls are not: all souls are mine, saith God; for he is the Former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own, they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men are his, that know him not, nor own their relation to him. Now this comes in here to shew, that though God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* it is not because he needs them or can be benefited by them, for the earth is his and all in it, *Exod. xix. 5. Psal. i. 12.* It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ hath as mediator over the utmost parts of the earth, which are given him for his possession; the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand, power over all flesh. The apostle quotes this scripture twice together in his discourse about things offered to idols, *1 Cor. x. 26, 28.* If it be sold in the shambles, eat it and ask no questions, for the earth is the Lord's, it is God's good creature, and you have a right to it; but if one tell you it was offered to an idol, forbear, *for the earth is the Lord's*, and there is enough besides. This is a good reason why we should be content with our allotment in this world, and not envy others theirs; *the earth is the Lord's*, and may he not do what he will with his own, and give to some more of it, to others less, as it pleaseth him?

2. The ground of this propriety; the earth is his by an indisputable title, *for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods, ver. 2.* It is his; for (1.) He made it, formed it, founded it, and fitted it for the use of man. The matter his; for he made it out of nothing; the form his, for he made it according to the eternal counsels and ideas of his own mind: He made it himself, he made it for himself; so that he is sole, entire, and

absolute owner, and none can lat us a title to any part, but by, from, and under him, see *Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12.* (2.) He made it so as no one else could; it is the creature of omnipotence, for it is founded upon the seas, upon the floods; a weak and unstable foundation (one would think) to build the earth upon, and yet if almighty power pleaseth, it shall serve to bear the weight of this earth. The waters which at first covered the earth, and rendered it unfit to be a habitation for man, were ordered under it, that the dry land might appear, and so they are as a foundation to it, see *Psal. civ. 8, 9.* (3.) He continues it; he hath established it, fixed it, so that though one generation passeth, and another cometh, the earth abideth, *Eccles. i. 4.* And his providence is a continued creation, *Psal. cxix. 90.* The founding of the earth upon the floods should mind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are, their foundation is not only sand, but water, it is therefore our folly to build upon them.

3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? 4. He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. 5. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

From this world and the fulness thereof the psalmist's meditations rise of a sudden to the great things of another world, the foundation of which is not on the seas nor on the floods. The things of this world God hath given to the children of men, and we are much indebted to his providence for them; but they will not make a portion for us. And therefore,

1. Here is an enquiry after better things, *ver. 3.* This earth is God's footstool; but if we had never so much of it, we must be here but a while, must shortly go hence, and *Who then shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall go to heaven hereafter?* and as an earnest of that shall have communion with God in holy ordinances now? A soul that knows and considers its own nature, original, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied; there is not found among all the creatures a help meet for man, and therefore it will think of ascending towards God, towards heaven; will ask, What shall I do to rise to that high place, that hill where the Lord dwells and manifests himself, that I may be acquainted with him; and to abide in that happy, holy place, where he meets his people, and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those, whom God owns for his peculiar people, and who are his in another manner, than the earth is his and its fulness? This question is much the same with that, *Psal. xv. 1.* the hill of Sion on which the temple was built, typified the church both visible and invisible: When the people attended the ark to its holy place, David puts them in mind, that these were but patterns of heavenly things, and therefore by them they should be led to consider the heavenly things themselves.

2. An answer to this inquiry: in which we have,  
1. The property of God's peculiar people, who shall have communion with him in grace and glory.

(1.) They are such as keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. They have clean hands; not spotted with the pollutions of the world and the flesh. None that were ceremonially unclean, might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation which is required in all those that have fellowship with God. The hands lifted up in prayer must be pure hands, no blot of unjust gain cleaving to them, nor any thing else that defiles the man, and is offensive to the holy God.

(2.) They are such as make conscience of being really, that is, of being inwardly as good as they seem to be outwardly. They have pure hearts. And we make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heart-work of it. It is not enough that our hands be clean before men, but we must also wash our hearts from wickedness, and not allow ourselves in any secret heart impurities, which are open before the eye of God. Yet in vain do those pretend to have pure and good hearts whose hands are defiled with the acts of sin. This is a pure heart which is sincere and without guile in covenanting with God, which is carefully guarded that the wicked one, the unclean spirit, touch it not; which is purified by faith and conformed to the image and will of God, see *Mat. v. 8.*

(3.) They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world; that do not lift up their souls unto vanity: whose hearts are not carried out inordinately towards the wealth of the world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense, who do not choose these things for their portion, nor reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain and unsatisfying.

(4.) They are such as deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God, and their contracts with men, they have not sworn deceitfully, nor broken their promises, violated their engagements, or taken any false oath. Those that have no regard to the obligations or truth of the honour of God's name, are unfit for a place in God's holy hill.

(5.) They are a praying people, *ver. 6. This is the generation of them that seek him.* In every age there is a remnant of such as these, men of this character, that are accounted to the Lord for a generation, *Psal. xxii. 30.* And they are such as seek God, *that seek thy face, O Jacob.* (1.) They join themselves to God to seek him; not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavour to obtain his favour, and keep themselves in his love, that having made it the top of their happiness, make it the top of their ambition to be accepted of him, and therefore take care and take pains to approve themselves to him. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend, and the way being up-hill, we have need to put forth ourselves to the utmost. As those that seek diligently. (2.) They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them; being brought into communion with God, they come into the communion with saints; conforming to the patterns of the saints that are gone before, so some understand this; they seek God's face as Jacob (so some) who was therefore surnamed Israel, because he wrestled with God and prevailed, sought him and found him; and associating with the saints of their own day, they shall court the favour of God's church, *Rev. iii. 9.* shall be glad of an acquaintance with God's people, *Zeck. viii. 23.* shall incorporate themselves with them, and when they subscribe with their hands to the Lord, shall call themselves by the name of Jacob, *Isa. xlv. 5.* As soon as ever Paul was converted, he joined himself to the disciples, *Acts ix. 26.* They shall seek God's face in Jacob (so some) i. e. in the assemblies of his people; *Thy face, O God of Jacob*, so our margin supplies it, and makes it easy. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer are the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, *Seek ye me in vain.*

3. The privileges of God's peculiar people, *ver. 5.* They shall be made truly and for ever happy. (1.) They shall be blessed: They shall receive the blessing from the Lord, all the fruits and gifts of God's favour, according to his promise; and those whom God blesteth, they are blessed



blessed indeed, for it is his prerogative to command the blessing. (2.) They shall be justified and sanctified: These are the spiritual blessings in heavenly things which they shall receive, even righteousness, the very thing they hunger and thirst after, *Matt. v. 6.* Righteousness is blessedness, and it is from God only that we must expect it, for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall receive the reward of their righteousness, (to some) the crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give, *2 Tim. iv. 8.* (3.) They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation. Note, Where God gives righteousness, he certainly designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven, shall be brought safe to heaven, and then they will find what they have been seeking to their endless satisfaction.

7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. 8. Who is this King of glory? the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. 9. Lift up your heads, O ye gates: even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. 10. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

What is spoken once, is spoken a second time in these verses; such repetitions are usual in songs, and have a great deal of beauty in them. Here is, (1.) Entrance once and again demanded for the King of glory, the doors and gates are to be thrown open, thrown wide open to give him admission, for behold, he stands at the door and knocks, ready to come in. (2.) Inquiry once and again made concerning this mighty prince in whose name entrance is demanded; *Who is this King of glory?* as when any knock at our door, it is common to ask, who is there? (3.) Satisfaction once and again given concerning the royal person that makes the demand, *It is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts,* ver. 8, 10. Now,

1. This splendid entry here described, it is probable, refers to the solemn bringing of the ark into the tent David pitched for it, or the temple Solomon built for it; for when David prepared materials for the building of it, it was proper enough for him to prepare a psalm for the dedication of it. The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called everlasting doors, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain. They are taught to ask, *Who is this King of glory?* And they that bore the ark thus to answer, and very fitly, because the ark was a symbol or token of God's presence, *Josh. iii. 11.* Or it may be taken as a poetical figure designed to represent the thing the more affectingly. God in his word and ordinances is thus to be welcomed by us, (1.) With great readiness; the door and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls, and if we had six hundred necks we should bow them all to the authority of it. (2.) With all reverence, remembering how great a God he is with whom we have to do, in all our approaches to him.

2. Doubtless it points at Christ, of whom the ark with the mercy-seat was a type.

1. We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven, and the welcome given to him there. When he had finished his work on earth, he ascended in the clouds of heaven, *Dan. vii. 13, 14.* The gates of heaven must then be opened to him, those doors that may be truly called everlasting, which had been shut against us, to keep the way of the tree of life, *Gen. iii. 24.* Our Redeemer found them shut, but having by blood made atonement for sin, and gained a title to enter into the holy place, *Heb. ix. 12,* as one having authority he demanded entrance, not for himself only, but for us; for as the forerunner he is for us entered, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The keys not only of hell and death, but heaven and life, are put into his hand. His approach being very magnificent, the angels are brought in asking, *Who is this King of glory?* for angels keep the gates of the New Jerusalem, *Rev. xxi. 12.* When the First-begotten was brought into the upper world, the angels were to worship him, *Heb. i. 6,* and accordingly they here ask with wonder, *Who is he?* this that cometh with dyed garments from Bozrah? *Isa. lxiii. 1, 2, 3,* for he appears in that world as a Lamb that had been slain. It is answered, that he is strong and mighty, mighty in battle to save his people, and subdue his and their enemies.

2. We may apply it to Christ's entrance into the souls of men by his word and Spirit, that they may be his temples; Christ's presence in them is like that of the ark in the temple, it sanctifies them. *Behold, he stands at the door and knocks,* *Rev. iii. 20.* It is required, that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him; not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is delivered to the rightful owner, after the title has been contested. This is the gospel call and demand; that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosannas, *Blessed is he that cometh.* That we may do this aright, we are concerned to ask, *Who is this King of glory?* to acquaint ourselves with him, whom we are to believe in, and to love above all. And the answer is ready; He is Jehovah, and will be Jehovah our righteousness, an all-sufficient Saviour to us, if we give him entrance and entertainment. He is strong and mighty, and the Lord of hosts; and therefore it is at our peril if we deny him entrance; for he is able to avenge the affront, he can force his way, and break those in pieces with his iron rod, that will not submit to his golden sceptre.

In singing this, let our heart cheerfully answer to this call, as it is in the first words of the next psalm, *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*

## P S A L M XXV.

This psalm is full of devout affection to God; the out-goings of holy desires towards his favour and grace, and the lively feelings of faith in his promises. We may learn out of it, (1.) What it is to pray, ver. 1, 15. (2.) What we must pray for: the pardon of sin, ver. 6, 7, 8. Direction in the way of duty, ver. 4, 5. The favour of God, ver. 16. Deliverance out of our troubles, ver. 17, 18. Preservation from our enemies, ver. 20, 21. And the salvation of the church of God, ver. 22. (3.) What we may plead in prayer; our confidence in God, ver. 2, 3, 5—20, 21. Our distress and the malice of our enemies, ver. 17, 19. Our sincerity, ver. 21. (4.) What precious promises we have to encourage us in prayer; of guidance and instruction, ver. 8, 9, 12. The benefit of the covenant, ver. 10. And the pleasure of communion with God, ver. 13, 14. It is easy to apply the several passages of this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it; for we have often troubles, and always sin to complain of, at the throne of grace.

## A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. UNTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. 2. O my God, I trust in thee, let me not be ashamed: let not mine enemies triumph over me. 3. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. 4. Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. 5. Lead me in thy truth and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day. 6. Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindneses: for they have been ever of old. 7. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake, O LORD.

Here is, 1. David's professions of desire towards God and dependence on him. He often begins his psalms with such professions; not to move God, but to move himself, and to engage himself, to answer those professions.

1. He professeth his desire towards God: *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul,* ver. 1. In the foregoing psalm, ver. 4, it was made the character of a good man, that he has not lift up his soul to vanity; and a call was given to the everlasting gates to lift up their heads for the King of glory to come in, ver. 1. To which character, to which call David here answers, *Lord, I lift up my soul, not to vanity, but to thee.* Note, In worshipping God we must lift up our souls to him. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God; God must be eyed and the soul employed; *Sursum corda,* Up with your hearts, was anciently used as a call to devotion. With a holy contempt of the world and the things of it, by a fixed thought and active faith we must set God before us, and let out our desires towards him as the fountain of our happiness.

2. He professeth his dependence upon God, and begs for the benefit and comfort of that dependence, ver. 2. *O my God, I trust in thee.* His conscience witnessed for him, that he had no confidence in himself or in any creature, and that he had no dissidence of God, or of his power or promise. He pleaseth himself with this profession of faith in God: Having put his trust in God, he is easy, is well-satisfied, and quiet from the fear of evil: And he pleads it with God. Whose honour it is to help those that honour him by trusting him. What men put a confidence in, is either their joy or their shame, according as it proves: Now David here, under the direction of faith, prays earnestly, (1.) That shame might not be his lot: *Let me not be ashamed of my confidence in thee;* let me not be shaken from it by any prevailing fears, and let me not be in the issue disappointed of what I depend upon thee for; but, *Lord, keep what I have committed unto thee.* Note, If we make our confidence in God our stay, it shall not be our shame. And if we triumph in him, our enemies shall not triumph over us, as they would, if we should now sink under our fears, or should in the issue come short of our hopes. (2.) That it might not be the lot of any that trusted in God. All the saints have obtained a like precious faith; and therefore doubtless it will be alike successful in the issue: And thus the communion of saints is kept up, even by their praying one for another. True saints will make supplication for all saints. It is certain, none that by a believing attendance wait on God, and by a believing hope wait for him, shall be made ashamed of it. (3.) That it might be the lot of the transgressors. *Let them be ashamed that transgress without cause, or vainly,* as the word is. (1.) Upon no provocation; they revolt from God and their duty, from David and his government (to some) without any occasion given them, not being able to pretend any iniquity they have found in God, or that in any thing he hath wearied them. The weaker the temptation is by which men are drawn to sin, the stronger the corruption is by which they are driven to it. Those are the worse transgressors that sin for sinning sake. (2.) To no purpose. They know their attempts against God are fruitless, they imagine a vain thing, and therefore they will soon be ashamed of them.

3. He begs direction from God in the way of his duty, ver. 4, 5. Once again he here prays to God to teach him. He was a knowing man himself, but the most intelligent, the most observant, both need and desire to be taught of God; from him we must be ever learning. Observe, (1.) What he desired to learn, teach me, not fine words or fine notions, but teach me thy ways, thy paths, thy truth. The ways in which thou walkest towards me, which are all mercy and truth, ver. 10. and the ways in which thou wouldst have me to walk towards thee. Those are best learned who understand their duty and know the good things they should do, *Eccles. ii. 3.* Thy paths and thy truths are the same; divine laws are all founded upon divine truths. The way of God's precepts is the way of truth, *Psal. cxix. 30.* Christ is both the way and the truth, and therefore we must learn Christ. (2.) What he desired of God in order to this. 1. That he would enlighten his understanding concerning his duty. *Shew me the way, and so teach me.* In doubtful cases we should pray earnestly that God should make it plain to us what he would have us to do. (2.) That he would incline his will to it, and strengthen him in it. *Lead me, and so teach me.* Not only as we lead one that is dim-sighted to keep him from missing his way, but as we lead one that is sick, and feeble, and fainty, to help him forward in the way, and to keep him from fainting and falling. We go no farther in the way to heaven than God is pleased to lead us and to hold us up. (3.) What he pleads, 1. His great expectation from God: *Thou art the God of my salvation.* Note, Those that choose the salvation of God as their end, and make him the God of their salvation, may come boldly to him for direction in the way that leads to that end. If God save us, he will teach us and lead us: He that gives salvation, will give instruction. 2. His constant attendance on God: *On thee do I wait all the day.* Whence should a servant expect direction what to do, but from his own master, on whom he waits all the day? If we sincerely desire to know our duty with a resolution to do it, we need not question, but that God will direct us in it.

4. He appeals to God's infinite mercy, and casts himself upon that, not pretending to any merit of his own, ver. 6. *Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies,* and for the sake of those mercies lead me and teach me; for they have been ever of old, i. e. (1.) Thou always wast a merciful God; it is thy name, it is thy nature and property to shew mercy. (2.) Thy counsels and designs of mercy were from everlasting; the vessels of mercy were before all worlds ordained to glory. (3.) The instances of thy mercy to the church in general, and to me in particular, were early and ancient, and constant hitherto; they began of old, and never ceased. Thou hast taught me from my youth up, teach me now.

5. He is in a special manner earnest for the pardon of his sins, ver. 7. *Remember not the sins of my youth;* Lord, remember thy mercies, ver. 6. which



which speak for me, and not my sins which speak against me. Here is; (1.) An implicit confession of sin; he insinuates particularly in the sins of his youth; Note, Our youthful faults and follies should be matter of our repentance and humiliation long after; because time doth not wear out the guilt of sin. Old people should mourn for the sinful mirth, and be in pain for the sinful pleasures of their youth. He aggravates his sins, calling them his transgressions: and the more holy, just and good the law is, which sin is the transgression of, the more exceeding sinful it ought to appear to us. (2.) An express petition for mercy. (1.) That he might be acquitted from guilt, *Remember not the sins of my youth*, i. e. remember them not against me, lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment with me for them. When God pardons sin, he is said to remember it no more, which notes a plenary remission; he forgives and forgets. (2.) That he might be accepted in God's sight; remember thou me; think on me for good, and come in seasonably for my succour. We need desire no more to make us happy, than for God to remember us with favour. His plea is, "according to thy mercy, and for thy goodness sake." Note, It is God's goodness and not ours, his mercy and not our own merit, that must be our plea for the pardon of sin, and all the good we stand in need of: This plea we must always rely upon, as those that are sensible of our poverty and unworthiness, and as those that are satisfied of the riches of God's mercy and grace.

8. Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. 9. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. 10. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. 11. For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. 12. What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. 13. His soul shall dwell at ease: and his seed shall inherit the earth. 14. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant.

God's promises are here mixed with David's prayers: Many petitions there were in the former part of the psalm, and many in the latter; and here in the middle of the psalm he meditates upon the promises, and by a lively faith sucks and is satisfied from these breasts of consolation; for the promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for, and encouraging our faith and hope in prayer; but they are a present answer to prayer. Let the prayer be made according to the promise, and then the promise may be read as a return to the prayer; and we are to believe the prayer is heard, because the promise will be performed. But in the midst of the promises, we find one petition which seems to come in somewhat abruptly, and should have followed upon, ver. 7. it is that, ver. 11. *Pardon mine iniquity*. But prayers for the pardon of sin are never impertinent; we mingle sin with all our actions, and therefore should mingle such prayers with all our devotions. He enforces this petition with a double plea. The former is very natural; *For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity*, because thou hast proclaimed thy name gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity; for thy glory sake, for thy promise sake, for thine own sake, *Isa. xliii. 25*. But the latter is very surprising; *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great*; and the greater it is, the more will divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it. It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins, to forgive iniquity, transgressions and sin, *Exod. xxxiv. 7*. It is great, and therefore I am undone, for ever undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose for the pardon of it. It is great, i. e. I see it so: The more we see of the heinousness of our sins, the better qualified we are to find mercy with God. When we confess sin, we must aggravate it.

Let us now take a view of the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong, and who may expect the benefit of them. We are all sinners, and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes, ver. 8. He will teach sinners, though they be sinners; for Christ came into the world to save sinners, and in order to that to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance.

These promises are sure to those, who though they have been sinners, have gone astray, yet now keep God's word. To such (1.) As keep his covenant and his testimonies, ver. 10. i. e. that take his precepts for their rule and his promises for their portion; that having taken God to be to them a God, live upon that, and having given up themselves to be to him a people, live up to that. Though through the infirmity of the flesh they sometimes break the command, yet by a sincere repentance, when at any time they do amiss, and a constant adherence by faith to God as their God, they keep the covenant, and do not break that. (2.) To such as fear him, ver. 12. and again, ver. 14, that stand in awe of his majesty, and worship him with reverence, submit to his authority and obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath and are afraid of offending him.

2. Upon what these promises are grounded, and what encouragement we have to build upon them. Here are two things which ratify and confirm all the promises.

(1.) The perfections of God's nature. We value the promise by the character of him that makes it; we may therefore depend upon God's promises, for good and upright is the Lord, and therefore he will be as good as his word. So kind that he cannot deceive us, so true that he cannot break his promise. *Faithful is he that hath promised*, who also will do it. He was good in making the promise, and therefore will be upright in performing it.

(2.) The agreeableness of all he saith and doth with the perfections of his nature, ver. 10. *All the paths of the Lord*, i. e. all his promises and all his providences are mercy and truth, i. e. they are like himself good and upright. All God's dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes, and the truth of his promises; all he doth comes from love, covenant love; and they may see it in his mercy displayed and his word fulfilled. What a mighty satisfaction may this be to good people; that whatever affliction they are exercised with, *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth*, and so it will appear when they come to their journey's end.

3. What these promises are,

1. That God will instruct and direct them in the way of their duty. This is most insisted upon, because it is an answer to David's prayers, ver. 4, 5. *Show me thy ways and lead me*. We should fix our thoughts and act our faith most on those promises, which suit our present case. (1.) He will teach sinners in the way, because they are sinners, and therefore need teaching, when they see themselves sinners and desire teaching, then he will teach them the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. He doth by his gospel make known this way to all, and by his Spirit open the understanding, and

guide penitent sinners that enquire after it. The devil leads men blindfold to hell, but God enlightens men's eyes, sets things before them in a true light, and so he leads them to heaven. (2.) The meek will he guide, the meek will he teach, i. e. those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolve to follow the divine conduct; *speak, Lord, for thy servant hears*. These he will guide in judgment, i. e. by the rule of the written word; he will guide them in that which is practical, which relates to sin and duty; so as that they may keep conscience void of offence: and he will do it judiciously, (so some) i. e. he will suit his conduct to their case; he will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them his way. All good people make God's way their way, and desire to be taught that; and those that do so shall be taught and led in that way. (3.) *Them that feareth the Lord, he will teach in the way that he shall choose*, either in the way that God shall choose, or that the good men shall choose. It comes all to one, for he that fears the Lord chooseth the things that please him. If we choose the right way, he that directed our choice will direct our steps, and will lead us in it. If we choose wisely, God will give us grace to walk wisely.

2. That God will make them easy, ver. 13. *His soul shall dwell at ease, shall lodge in goodness*, marg. Those that devote themselves to the fear of God, and give up themselves to be taught of God, it is their own fault if they be not easy. The soul that is sanctified by the grace of God, and much more that is comforted by the peace of God, dwells at ease. Even when the body is sick and lies in pain, yet the soul may dwell at ease in God, may return to him and repose in him as its rest. Many things occur to make us uneasy, but there is enough in the covenant of grace to balance them all and to make us easy.

3. That he will give them and theirs as much of this world as is good for them. *His seed shall inherit the earth*. Next to our care concerning our souls is our care concerning our seed, and God has a blessing in store for the generation of the upright. They that fear God shall inherit the earth, shall have a competency in it and the comfort of it; and their children shall fare the better for their prayers, when they are gone.

4. That God will admit them into the secret of communion with himself, ver. 14. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*. They understand his word, for if any man do his will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, John vii. 17. They that receive the truth in the love of it, and experience the power of it, best understand the mystery of it. They know the meaning of his providence, and what God is doing with them, better than others. *Shall I hide from Abraham the things that I do?* Gen. xviii. 17. He calls them not servants, but friends, as he called Abraham. They know by experience the blessings of the covenant, and the pleasures of that fellowship which gracious souls have with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ. This honour have all his saints.

15. Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD: for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. 16. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me: for I am desolate and afflicted. 17. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. 18. Look upon mine affliction; and my pain, and forgive all my sins. 19. Consider mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred. 20. O keep my soul and deliver me: let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee. 21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me: for I wait on thee. 22. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

David encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here renews his addresses to God, and concludes the psalm as he began with the professions of dependence upon God and desire towards him.

1. He lays open before God the calamitous condition he was in: His feet were in the net, held fast and entangled, so that he could not extricate himself out of his difficulties, ver. 15. *He was desolate and afflicted*, ver. 16. And it is common for those that are afflicted to be desolate; their friends desert them then, and they are themselves disposed to sit alone and keep silence, *Lam. iii. 26*. David calls himself desolate and solitary, because he depended not upon his servants and soldiers, but relied as entirely upon God, as if he had no prospect at all of help and succour from any creature. Being in distress, in many distresses, *the troubles of his heart were enlarged*, ver. 17. i. e. He grew more and more melancholy and troubled in mind. Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: that was it that broke and wounded his spirit, and made his outward troubles lie heavy upon him. He was in affliction and pain, ver. 18. His enemies that persecuted him were many and malicious, they hated him; and very barbarous, it was with a cruel hatred that they hated him, ver. 19. Such were Christ's enemies and the persecutors of his church.

2. He expressed the dependence he had upon God in these distresses, ver. 15. *Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord*. Idolaters were for gods that they could see with their bodily eyes, and they had their eyes ever towards their idols, *Isa. xvii. 7, 8*. But it is an eye of faith that we must have towards God, who is a spirit, *Sech. ix. 1*. Our meditation of him must be sweet, and we must always set him before us: in all our ways we must acknowledge him, and do all to his glory. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, not only in ordinances, but in providences, not only in the acts of devotion, but in the whole course of our conversation. David had the comfort of this in his affliction; for because his eyes were ever towards the Lord, he doubted not but he would pluck his feet out of the net; that he would deliver him from the corruptions of his own heart, (so some) from the designs of his enemies against him, (so others). Those that have their eyes ever towards God, shall not have their feet long in the net. Here repeats his profession of dependence upon God, ver. 20. *Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee*; and of expectation from him, *I wait on thee*, ver. 21. And it is good thus to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.

3. He prays earnestly to God for relief and succour.

1. For himself: see how he begs, (1.) For the remission of sin, ver. 18. *Forgive all my sins*: Those were his heaviest burdens, and which brought upon him all his other burdens. He had begged, ver. 7. for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and ver. 11. for the pardon of some one particular iniquity that was remarkably great, which some think was his sin in the matter of Uriah: But here he prays, *Lord, forgive all, take away all iniquity*. It is observable, that as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it, *Look upon my afflictions and my pain*; and do with it as thou pleasest; But as to his sin, he asks for no less than a pardon, *Forgive all my sins*. When at any time we are in trouble, we should be more concerned about our sins to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions to get them removed.



moved. Yet he prays, (2.) For the redress of his grievances. His mind was troubled for God's withdrawing from him, and under the sense he had of his displeasure against him for his sin; and therefore he prays, *ver. 16. Turn thee unto me*; And if God turn to us, no matter who turns from us. His condition was troubled, and in reference to that he prays, *O bring thou me out of my distresses*. I see no way of deliverance open; but thou canst either find one, or make one. His enemies were spiteful; and in reference to that he prays, *O keep my soul from falling into their hands, or else deliver me out of their hands*.

Four things he mentions by way of plea, to enforce these petitions; and refers himself and them to God's consideration. (1.) He pleads God's mercy; *Have mercy upon me*. Men of greatest merits were undone, if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercies. (2.) He pleads his own misery, the distress he was in, his affliction and pain, especially the troubles of his heart: All which made him the proper object of divine mercy. (3.) He pleads the iniquity of his enemies: Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands. (4.) He pleads his own integrity, *ver. 21*. Though he had owned himself guilty before God, and had confessed his sins against him; yet as to his enemies, he had the testimony of his conscience that he had done them no wrong: which was his comfort, when they hated him with cruel hatred: And he prays, that this might preserve him. This intimates, that he did not expect to be safe any longer than he continued in his integrity and uprightness: and that while he did continue in it, he did not doubt of being safe. Sincerity will be our best security in the worst of times. Integrity and uprightness will be a man's preservation more than the wealth and honour of the world can be; this will preserve us to the heavenly kingdom. We shall therefore pray to God to preserve us in our integrity, and then be assured that that will preserve us.

2. For the church of God, *ver. 22. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles*. David was now in trouble himself, but he thinks it not strange, since trouble is the lot of all God's Israel: and why should any other member fare better than the whole body? David's troubles were enlarged, and very earnest he was with God to deliver him, yet he forgets not the distresses of God's church; for when we have never so much business of our own at the throne of grace we must still remember to pray for the public. Good men have little comfort in their own safety, while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy, that God would at length give David rest, and therewith give Israel rest from all their enemies round about. It is a prophecy, of the sending of the Messiah in due time to *redeem Israel from his iniquities*, *Psal. cxxx. 8*. and so to redeem them from their troubles: And of the happiness of the future state. In heaven and heaven only, will God's Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

## P S A L M XXVI.

*Holy David is in this psalm putting himself upon a solemn trial, not by God and his country, but by God and his own conscience; to both which he appeals touching his integrity, ver. 1, 2. And for the proof of it, he alledgeth, (1.) His constant regard to God and his grace, ver. 3. (2.) His rooted antipathy to sin and sinners, ver. 4, 5. (3.) His sincere affection to the ordinances of God, and his care about them, ver. 6, 7, 8. Having thus proved his integrity, (1.) He deprecates the doom of the wicked, ver. 9, 10. (2.) He casts himself upon the mercy and grace of God; with a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and his hope in God, ver. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we must be and do, that we may have the favour of God and comfort in our consciences; and comfort ourselves with it as David doth, if we can say, that in any measure we have through grace answered these characters. The learned Amyraldus, in his argument of this psalm, suggests that David is here, by the spirit of prophecy, carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here saith of his spotless innocency was fully and eminently true, and of him only we may apply it in singing this psalm. We are complete in him.*

## A PSALM OF DAVID.

**I. JUDGE** me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD: therefore I shall not slide. 2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. 3. For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth. 4. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. 5. I have hated the congregation of evil doers: and will not sit with the wicked.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who to give some colour to their unjust rage represented him as a very ill man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdemeanors, dressed him up in the skins of wild beasts, that they might bait him. Innocency itself is no fence to the name, though it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers, that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David doth in this case,

1. He appeals to God's righteous sentence, *ver. 1. Judge me, O God*, i. e. Be thou judge between me and my accusers, between the prosecutor and the poor prisoner; bring me off with honour, and put them to shame that belie me. Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary, so that in a controversy with him, he could appeal to no other but to God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, *Lord, enter not into judgment with me*, *Psal. cxliii. 2. Remember not my transgressions*, *Psal. xlv. 7*. there he appeals to God's mercy; but as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God's justice, and begs of him to judge for him, as *Psal. xliii. 1*. Or thus, he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin, he owns his iniquity is great, and he is undone if God, in his infinite mercy do not forgive him; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope, that according to the tenor of the covenant of grace he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned, and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused, that there is a righteous God who sooner or later will clear up their innocency; and a comfort to all that are sincere in religion, that God himself is a witness to his sincerity.

2. He submits to his unerring search, *ver. 2. Examine me, O Lord, and*

*prove me*, as gold is proved, whether it be standard. God knows every man's true character, for he knows the thoughts and intention of the heart and sees through every disguise; David prays, *Lord, examine me*; which speaks him greatly well pleased that God did know him, and truly desires that he would discover him to himself, and discover him to all the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to his God and his loyalty to his prince (in both which he was suspected to be a pretender) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that who would might look into his heart.

3. He solemnly protests his sincerity, *ver. 1. I have walked in mine integrity*, i. e. my conversation has agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another. It is in vain to boast of our integrity, unless we can make it out, that by the grace of God we have walked in our integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and godly sincerity.

He produceth here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord as his righteous Judge, who would patronize and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance that he would come off with reputation, *therefore I shall not slide*; that they should not prevail, who consulted to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blemish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, *Psal. lxxii. 4*. They that are sincere in religion, may trust in God that they shall not slide, i. e. that they shall not apostatize from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, *ver. 3. (1.) He aimed at God's favour as his end and chief good. Thy loving kindness is before mine eyes*. This will be a good evidence of our sincerity; if what we do in religion, we do from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings, and the best of friends and benefactors; and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which we have had experience of all our days. If we set God's loving kindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being followers of him that is good in his goodness, *1 Pet. iii. 13*. If we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing any thing to forfeit God's favour, and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love; this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it. (2.) He governed himself by the word of God as his rule. *I have walked in thy truth*, i. e. according to thy law, for thy law is truth. Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's loving kindness that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon them. Some understand it of his conforming himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and loving kindness. Those certainly walk well that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, *ver. 4, 5*. By this it appeared that he was truly loyal to his prince, that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those *sons of Belial that despise him*, *1 Sam. x. 27*. He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, no not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those that he had any reason to think were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies or false friends to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company, is both a good evidence of our integrity, and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here, (1.) That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take. I have not sat with them, and I will not go in with them. Note, Our good practices hitherto are then evidences of our integrity, when they are accompanied with resolutions in God's strength to persevere in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of, when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto. (2.) That David shunned the company not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety, and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more pernicious of the two to a good man, because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity, as against that of downright wickedness. (3.) That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any other, and as much to be shunned, in prudence as well as piety. Evil doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares, but they *dissemble*; when they speak fair, believe them not. (4.) Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not go in with them, i. e. he would not choose such for his companions, nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them; he might light in with them, but he would not by appointment and assiduation go with them: Or if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them, i. e. he would not continue with them; he would be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary; he would not concur with them, nor sail as they sail, nor do as they did, as they that *sit in the seat of the scornful*, *Psal. i. 1*. He would not sit in counsel with them upon ways and means to do mischief, nor sit in judgment with them to condemn the generation of the righteous. (5.) We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and affections we must have an aversion to it. David here saith, not only I have shunned it, but I have hated it, *Psal. cxxxix. 21*. (6.) The congregation of evil doers, the club, the confederacy of them, is in a special manner hateful to good people. I have hated the church of the malignant, (*Ecclesiam malignantium*) so the vulgar Latin reads it. As good men in concert make one another better, and are enabled to do so much the more good, so bad men in combination make one another worse, and do so much the more mischief. In all this David was both a type of Christ, who, though he received sinners, and eat with them, to instruct them and do them good; yet otherwise was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the Pharisees, those dissemblers; and an example to christians, when they joined themselves to Christ, to *save themselves from this untoward generation*, *Acts ii. 40*.

6. I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD. 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. 8. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. 9. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: 10. In whose hands is mischief; and their right hand is full of bribes. 11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me. 12. My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the LORD.



which speak for me, and not my sins which speak against me. Here is; (1.) An implicit confession of sin; he fancieth particularly in the sins of his youth; Note, Our youthful faults and follies should be matter of our repentance and humiliation long after; because time doth not wear out the guilt of sin. Old people should mourn for the sinful mirth, and be in pain for the sinful pleasures of their youth. He aggravates his sins, calling them his transgressions: and the more holy, just and good the law is, which sin is the transgression of, the more exceeding sinful it ought to appear to us. (2.) An express petition for mercy. (1.) That he might be acquitted from guilt, *Remember not the sins of my youth*, i. e. remember them not against me, lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment with me for them. When God pardons sin, he is said to remember it no more, which notes a plenary remission; he forgives and forgets. (2.) That he might be accepted in God's sight; remember thou me; think on me for good, and come in seasonably for my succour. We need desire no more to make us happy, than for God to remember us with favour. His plea is, "according to thy mercy, and for thy goodness sake." Note, It is God's goodness and not ours, his mercy and not our own merit, that must be our plea for the pardon of sin, and all the good we stand in need of: This plea we must always rely upon, as those that are sensible of our poverty and unworthiness, and as those that are satisfied of the riches of God's mercy and grace.

8. Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. 9. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. 10. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. 11. For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. 12. What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. 13. His soul shall dwell at ease: and his seed shall inherit the earth. 14. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant.

God's promises are here mixed with David's prayers: Many petitions there were in the former part of the psalm, and many in the latter; and here in the middle of the psalm he meditates upon the promises, and by a lively faith sucks and is satisfied from these breasts of consolation; for the promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for, and encouraging our faith and hope in prayer; but they are a present answer to prayer. Let the prayer be made according to the promise, and then the promise may be read as a return to the prayer; and we are to believe the prayer is heard, because the promise will be performed. But in the midst of the promises, we find one petition which seems to come in somewhat abruptly, and should have followed upon, *ver. 7.* it is that, *ver. 11. Pardon mine iniquity.* But prayers for the pardon of sin are never impertinent; we mingle sin with all our actions, and therefore should mingle such prayers with all our devotions. He enforces this petition with a double plea. The former is very natural; *For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity*, because thou hast proclaimed thy name gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity; for thy glory sake, for thy promise sake, for thine own sake, *Isa. xliii. 25.* But the latter is very surprising; *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great*; and the greater it is, the more will divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it. It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins, to forgive iniquity, transgressions and sin, *Exod. xxiv. 7.* It is great, and therefore I am undone, for ever undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose for the pardon of it. It is great, i. e. I see it so: The more we see of the heinousness of our sins, the better qualified we are to find mercy with God. When we confess sin, we must aggravate it.

Let us now take a view of the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong, and who may expect the benefit of them. We are all sinners, and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes, *ver. 8.* He will teach sinners, though they be sinners; for Christ came into the world to save sinners, and in order to that to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance.

These promises are sure to those, who though they have been sinners, have gone astray, yet now keep God's word. To such (1.) As keep his covenant and his testimonies, *ver. 10.* i. e. that take his precepts for their rule and his promises for their portion; that having taken God to be to them a God, live upon that, and having given up themselves to be to him a people, live up to that. Though through the infirmity of the flesh they sometimes break the command, yet by a sincere repentance, when at any time they do amiss, and a constant adherence by faith to God as their God, they keep the covenant, and do not break that. (2.) To such as fear him, *ver. 12.* and again, *ver. 14.* that stand in awe of his majesty, and worship him with reverence, submit to his authority and obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath and are afraid of offending him.

2. Upon what these promises are grounded, and what encouragement we have to build upon them. Here are two things which ratify and confirm all the promises.

(1.) The perfections of God's nature. We value the promise by the character of him that makes it; we may therefore depend upon God's promises, for good and upright is the Lord, and therefore he will be as good as his word. So kind that he cannot deceive us, so true that he cannot break his promise. *Faithful is he that hath promised*, who also will do it. He was good in making the promise, and therefore will be upright in performing it.

(2.) The agreeableness of all he saith and doth with the perfections of his nature, *ver. 10.* *All the paths of the Lord*, i. e. all his promises and all his providences are mercy and truth, i. e. they are like himself good and upright. All God's dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes, and the truth of his promises; all he doth comes from love, covenant love; and they may see it in his mercy displayed and his word fulfilled. What a mighty satisfaction may this be to good people, that whatever affliction they are exercised with, *All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth*, and so it will appear when they come to their journey's end.

3. What these promises are,

1. That God will instruct and direct them in the way of their duty. This is most insisted upon, because it is an answer to David's prayers, *ver. 4, 5.* *Show me thy ways and lead me.* We should fix our thoughts and act our faith most on those promises, which suit our present case. (1.) He will teach sinners in the way, because they are sinners, and therefore need teaching, when they see themselves sinners and desire teaching, then he will teach them the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. He doth by his gospel make known this way to all, and by his Spirit open the understanding, and

guide penitent sinners that enquire after it. The devil leads men blindfold to hell, but God enlightens men's eyes, sets things before them in a true light, and so he leads them to heaven. (2.) The meek will he guide, the meek will he teach, i. e. those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolve to follow the divine conduct; *speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.* These he will guide in judgment, i. e. by the rule of the written word; he will guide them in that which is practical, which relates to sin and duty; so as that they may keep conscience void of offence: and he will do it judiciously, (so some) i. e. he will suit his conduct to their case; he will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them his way. All good people make God's way their way, and desire to be taught that; and those that do so shall be taught and led in that way. (3.) *Him that feareth the Lord, he will teach in the way that he shall choose*, either in the way that God shall choose, or that the good men shall choose. It comes all to one, for he that fears the Lord chooseth the things that please him. If we choose the right way, he that directed our choice will direct our steps, and will lead us in it. If we choose wisely, God will give us grace to walk wisely.

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15. Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD: for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. 16. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me: for I am desolate and afflicted. 17. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. 18. Look upon mine affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sins. 19. Consider mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred. 20. O keep my soul and deliver me: let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee. 21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me: for I wait on thee. 22. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

David encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here renews his addresses to God, and concludes the psalm as he began with the professions of dependence upon God and desire towards him.

1. He lays open before God the calamitous condition he was in: His feet were in the net, held fast and entangled, so that he could not extricate himself out of his difficulties, *ver. 15.* *He was desolate and afflicted*, *ver. 16.* And it is common for those that are afflicted to be desolate; their friends desert them then, and they are themselves disposed to sit alone and keep silence, *Lam. iii. 26.* David calls himself desolate and solitary, because he depended not upon his servants and soldiers, but relied as entirely upon God, as if he had no prospect at all of help and succour from any creature. Being in distress, in many distresses, *the troubles of his heart were enlarged*, *ver. 17.* i. e. He grew more and more melancholy and troubled in mind. Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: that was it that broke and wounded his spirit, and made his outward troubles lie heavy upon him. He was in affliction and pain, *ver. 18.* His enemies that persecuted him were many and malicious, they hated him; and very barbarous, it was with a cruel hatred that they hated him, *ver. 19.* Such were Christ's enemies and the persecutors of his church.

2. He expressed the dependence he had upon God in these distresses, *ver. 15.* *Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord.* Idolaters were for gods that they could see with their bodily eyes, and they had their eyes ever towards their idols, *Isa. xlvii. 7, 8.* But it is an eye of faith that we must have towards God, who is a spirit, *Sech. ix. 1.* Our meditation of him must be sweet, and we must always set him before us: in all our ways we must acknowledge him, and do all to his glory. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, not only in ordinances, but in providences, not only in the acts of devotion, but in the whole course of our conversation. David had the comfort of this in his affliction; for because his eyes were ever towards the Lord, he doubted not but he would pluck his feet out of the net; that he would deliver him from the corruptions of his own heart, (so some) from the designs of his enemies against him, (so others). Those that have their eyes ever towards God, shall not have their feet long in the net. He repeats his profession of dependence upon God, *ver. 20.* *Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee*; and of expectation from him, *I wait on thee*, *ver. 21.* And it is good thus to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.

3. He prays earnestly to God for relief and succour.

1. For himself: see how he begs, (1.) For the remission of sin, *ver. 18.* *Forgive all my sins*: Those were his heaviest burdens, and which brought upon him all his other burdens. He had begged, *ver. 7.* for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and *ver. 11.* for the pardon of some one particular iniquity that was remarkably great, which some think was his sin in the matter of Uriah: But here he prays, *Lord, forgive all, take away all iniquity.* It is observable, that as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it, *Look upon my afflictions and my pain*, and do with it as thou pleasest; But as to his sin, he asks for no less than a pardon, *Forgive all my sins.* When at any time we are in trouble, we should be more concerned about our sins to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions to get them removed.



moved. Yet he prays, (2.) For the redress of his grievances. His mind was troubled for God's withdrawing from him, and under the sense he had of his displeasure against him for his sin; and therefore he prays, *ver. 16. Turn thee unto me*; And if God turn to us, no matter who turns from us. His condition was troubled, and in reference to that he prays, *O bring thou me out of my distresses*. I see no way of deliverance open; but thou canst either find one, or make one. His enemies were spiteful; and in reference to that he prays, *O keep my soul from falling into their hands, or else deliver me out of their hands*.

Four things he mentions by way of plea, to enforce these petitions; and refers himself and them to God's consideration. (1.) He pleads God's mercy; *Have mercy upon me*. Men of greatest merits were undone, if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercies. (2.) He pleads his own misery, the distress he was in, his affliction and pain, especially the troubles of his heart: All which made him the proper object of divine mercy. (3.) He pleads the iniquity of his enemies: Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands. (4.) He pleads his own integrity, *ver. 21*. Though he had owned himself guilty before God, and had confessed his sins against him; yet as to his enemies, he had the testimony of his conscience that he had done them no wrong: which was his comfort, when they hated him with cruel hatred: And he prays, that this might preserve him. This intimates, that he did not expect to be safe any longer than he continued in his integrity and uprightness: and that while he did continue in it, he did not doubt of being safe. Sincerity will be our best security in the worst of times. Integrity and uprightness will be a man's preservation more than the wealth and honour of the world can be; this will preserve us to the heavenly kingdom. We shall therefore pray to God to preserve us in our integrity, and then be assured that that will preserve us.

2. For the church of God, *ver. 22*. *Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles*. David was now in trouble himself, but he thinks it not strange, since trouble is the lot of all God's Israel: and why should any other member fare better than the whole body! David's troubles were enlarged, and very earnest he was with God to deliver him, yet he forgets not the distresses of God's church; for when we have never so much business of our own at the throne of grace we must still remember to pray for the public. Good men have little comfort in their own safety, while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy, that God would at length give David rest, and therewith give Israel rest from all their enemies round about. It is a prophecy, of the sending of the Messiah in due time to *redeem Israel from his iniquities*, *Psal. cxxx. 8*. and so to redeem them from their troubles: And of the happiness of the future state. In heaven and heaven only, will God's Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

P S A L M XXVI.

*Holy David is in this psalm putting himself upon a solemn trial, not by God and his country, but by God and his own conscience; to both which he appeals touching his integrity, ver. 1, 2. And for the proof of it, he alledgeth, (1.) His constant regard to God and his grace, ver. 3. (2.) His rooted antipathy to sin and sinners, ver. 4, 5. (3.) His sincere affliction to the ordinances of God, and his care about them, ver. 6, 7, 8. Having thus proved his integrity, (1.) He deprecates the doom of the wicked, ver. 9, 10. (2.) He casts himself upon the mercy and grace of God; with a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and his hope in God, ver. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, what we must be and do, that we may have the favour of God and comfort in our consciences; and comfort ourselves with it as David doth, if we can say, that in any measure we have through grace answered these characters. The learned Amyraldus, in his argument of this psalm, suggests that David is here, by the spirit of prophecy, carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here saith of his spotless innocency was fully and eminently true, and of him only we may apply it in singing this psalm. We are complete in him.*

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **J**UDGE me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. 2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. 3. For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth. 4. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. 5. I have hated the congregation of evil doers: and will not sit with the wicked.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who to give some colour to their unjust rage represented him as a very ill man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdemeanors, dressed him up in the skins of wild beasts, that they might bait him. Innocency itself is no fence to the name, though it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers, that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David doth in this case,

1. He appeals to God's righteous sentence, *ver. 1*. *Judge me, O God, i. e. Be thou judge between me and my accusers, between the prosecutor and the poor prisoner; bring me off with honour, and put them to shame that belie me*. Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary, so that in a controversy with him, he could appeal to no other but to God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, *Lord, enter not into judgment with me*, *Psal. cxliii. 2*. *Remember not my transgressions*, *Psal. xxv. 7*. there he appeals to God's mercy; but as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God's justice, and begs of him to judge for him, as *Psal. xlii. 1*. Or thus, he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin, he owns his iniquity is great, and he is undone if God, in his infinite mercy do not forgive him; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope, that according to the tenor of the covenant of grace he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned, and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused, that there is a righteous God who sooner or later will clear up their innocency; and a comfort to all that are sincere in religion, that God himself is a witness to his sincerity.

2. He submits to his unerring search, *ver. 2*. *Examine me, O Lord, and*

*prove me*, as gold is proved, whether it be standard. God knows every man's true character, for he knows the thoughts and intention of the heart and sees through every disguise; David prays, *Lord, examine me*; which speaks him greatly well pleased that God did know him, and truly desirous that he would discover him to himself, and discover him to all the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to his God and his loyalty to his prince (in both which he was suspected to be a pretender) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that who would might look into his heart.

3. He solemnly protests his sincerity, *ver. 1*. *I have walked in mine integrity, i. e. my conversation has agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another*. It is in vain to boast of our integrity, unless we can make it out, that by the grace of God we have walked in our integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and godly sincerity.

He produceth here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord as his righteous Judge, who would patronize and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance that he would come off with reputation, *therefore I shall not slide*; that they should not prevail, who consulted to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blemish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, *Psal. lxxii. 4*. They that are sincere in religion, may trust in God that they shall not slide, i. e. that they shall not apostatize from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, *ver. 3*. (1.) He aimed at God's favour as his end and chief good. *Thy loving kindness is before mine eyes*. This will be a good evidence of our sincerity; if what we do in religion, we do from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings, and the best of friends and benefactors; and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which we have had experience of all our days. If we set God's loving kindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being followers of him that is good in his goodness, *1 Pet. iii. 13*. If we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing any thing to forfeit God's favour, and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love; this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it. (2.) He governed himself by the word of God as his rule. *I have walked in thy truth, i. e. according to thy law, for thy law is truth*. Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's loving kindness that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon them. Some understand it of his conforming himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and loving kindness. Those certainly walk well that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, *ver. 4, 5*. By this it appeared that he was truly loyal to his prince, that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those *sons of Belial that despise him*, *1 Sam. x. 27*. He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, no not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those that he had any reason to think were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies or false friends to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company, is both a good evidence of our integrity, and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here, (1.) That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take. I have not sat with them, and I will not go in with them. Note, Our good practices hitherto are then evidences of our integrity, when they are accompanied with resolutions in God's strength to persevere in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of, when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto. (2.) That David shunned the company not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety, and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more pernicious of the two to a good man, because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity, as against that of downright wickedness. (3.) That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any other, and as much to be shunned, in prudence as well as piety. Evil doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares, but they *dissemble*; when they speak fair, believe them not. (4.) Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not go in with them, i. e. he would not choose such for his companions, nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them; he might light in with them, but he would not by appointment and assiguation go with them: Or if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them, i. e. he would not continue with them; he would be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary; he would not concur with them, nor said as they said, nor do as they did, as they that *sit in the seat of the scornful*, *Psal. i. 1*. He would not sit in counsel with them upon ways and means to do mischief, nor sit in judgment with them to condemn the generation of the righteous. (5.) We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and affections we must have an aversion to it. David here saith, not only I have shunned it, but I have hated it, *Psal. cxxxix. 21*. (6.) The congregation of evil doers, the club, the confederacy of them, is in a special manner hateful to good people. I have hated the church of the malignant, (*Ecclesiam malignantium*) so the vulgar Latin reads it. As good men in concert make one another better, and are enabled to do so much the more good, so bad men in combination make one another worse, and do so much the more mischief. In all this David was both a type of Christ, who, though he received sinners, and eat with them, to instruct them and do them good; yet otherwise was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the Pharisees, those dissemblers; and an example to christians, when they joined themselves to Christ, to *save themselves from this untoward generation*, *Acts ii. 40*.

6. I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD. 7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works. 8. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. 9. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: 10. In whose hands is mischief; and their right hand is full of bribes. 11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me. 12. My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the LORD.



In these verses.

1. David produceth a farther evidence of his integrity, which was the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, and the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attendant on God's ordinances, the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican; but it is a good sign of sincerity if we attend upon them, as David here tells us he did, *ver. 6, 7, 8.*

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances. *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the place he had among those that compassed God's altar. *I will wash, and so will I compass thine altar,* knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome. This is like that, *1 Cor. xi. 28.* Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat: so prepared. This notes, (1.) Habitual preparation; *I will wash mine hands in innocency, i. e.* I will fully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those dead works which defile it, and forbid my drawing nigh to God. See *Psal. xxiv. 3, 4.* (2.) Actual preparation. It alludes to the ceremony of the priests washing when they went into minister, *Exod. xxx. 20, 21.* Though David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparations for solemn ordinances, we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reigning infidelity and hypocrisy, and to protest our innocency of that, (which was signified by *washing the hands*, *Deut. xxi. 6.*) but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity by renewing our repentance, and making a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences, for the purifying and pacifying of them. He that is washed, that is in a justified state, has need thus to *wash his feet*, *John xiii. 10.* to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency: he that is penitent is (*pen. innocens*) almost innocent, and he that is pardoned is so far innocent that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them; *I will compass thine altar:* alluding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering walked round the altar, and probably the offerers likewise did so at some distance, noting a diligent regard to what was done and a dutiful attendance on the service. *I will compass it, i. e.* I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them. David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, yet thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars, and could find time for that attendance. Note, (1.) All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands, and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our altar, not as the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of, and *live upon*; *Heb. xiii. 10.* (2.) It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed, and to see ourselves among them that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances he aimed at the glory of God, and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the place of worship, as the place where God's honour dwelt, *ver. 8.* and therefore made it his business there to honour God, and to give him the glory due to his name: to publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's wondrous works: God's gracious works, which call for our thanksgiving, are all wondrous works which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them, and tell of them for his glory, and excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving, as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all ways possible to acknowledge with gratitude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight, and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this he appeals to God, Lord, thou knowest how dearly *I have loved the habitation of thy house*, *ver. 8. i. e.* the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people, and receive their homage, the place where thy honour dwells. David was sometimes forced by persecution into the countries of idolaters, and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors, that laid him under that restraint, did themselves upbraid him with as his crime. See *1 Sam. xx. 27.* But, Lord, faith he, though I cannot come to the habitation of thine house, I love it, my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there. Note, All that truly love God, truly love the ordinances of God, and therefore love them, because in them he manifest his honour, and they have an opportunity of honouring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him: he loved the habitation of his house, *i. e.* his church among men, loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it. And those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching to him, as a thing itself is a constant pleasure, so it is to them a comfortable evidence of their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

2. David having given proofs of his integrity, doth with a humble confidence towards God, (such as they have whose hearts condemn them not) earnestly pray that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked, *ver. 9, 10.* *Gather not my soul with sinners.* Here, (1.) David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable, that he could not with the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. They are bloody men, that thirst after blood, and lie under a great deal of the guilt of blood. They do mischief, and mischief is always in their hands: though they get by their wickedness, for their right hand is full of bribes which they have taken to pervert justice, yet that will make the case never the better; for *what is a man profited if he gain the world, and lose his soul?* (2.) He dreads having his lot with them; he never loved them, nor associated with them in this world, and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered to return to God that gave them, and will call for them again. See *Job xxxiv. 14.* It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners; whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are, *1 Sam. xxv. 29.* or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, *Matt. xiii. 30.* Death gathers us to our people; those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with, and with whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot to eternity. Baalam desired to die the death of the righteous, David dreaded dying the death of the wicked; so that both sides are of that mind, which if we be of and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor eat of their dainties, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

3. David with a holy humble confidence commits himself to the grace of God, *ver. 11, 12.* (1.) He promiseth that by the grace of God he would persevere in his duty: *As for me, whatever others do, I will walk in mine integrity.* Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us, that we have walked in our integrity, is comfortable to us, that should confirm our resolutions to continue therein. (2.) He prays for the divine grace, both to enable to do so, and to give him the comfort of it: Redeem me

out of the hands of my enemies, and be merciful to me, living and dying. Be we never so confident of our integrity; yet still we must rely upon God's mercy, and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them. (3.) He pleaseth himself with his steadiness; *My foot stands in an even place*, where I shall not stumble, and whence I shall not fall. This he speaks as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world; and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world. (4.) He promiseth himself that he should be furnished with matter for praise, that he should have a heart for praises; and that though he was now perhaps banished from public ordinances, yet he should again have an opportunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evil doers shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous, and join with them in praising God: And it is pleasant doing that in good company, the more the better, it is the liker to heaven.

P S A L M XXVII.

Some think David penned this psalm before his coming to the throne, when he was in the midst of his troubles, and perhaps upon occasion of the death of his parents; but the Jews think he penned it when he was old, upon occasion of that wonderful deliverance he had from the sword of the giant, when Abishai succoured him, *2 Sam. xxi. 16, 17.* and his people thereupon refused he should never venture his life again in battle, lest he should quench the light of Israel. Perhaps it was not penned upon any particular occasion; but it is very expressive of the pious and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out towards God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is, (1.) The courage and holy bravery of his faith, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* (2.) The complacency he took in communion with God, and the benefit he experienced by it, *ver. 4, 5, 6.* (3.) His desire towards God, and his favour and grace, *ver. 7—9—11, 12.* (4.) His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others to hope in him, *ver. 10—13, 14.* And let our hearts be thus affected in singing this psalm.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. THE LORD is my light, and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2. When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me, to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. 4. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. 5. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me up upon a rock. 6. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

We may observe here,

1. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him. (1.) *The Lord is my light*, David's subjects called him the light of Israel, *2 Sam. xxi. 17.* And he was indeed a burning and a shining light: but he owns that he shone as the moon doth with a borrowed light; what light God darted upon him, reflected upon them; *The Lord is my light.* God is a light to his people, to shew them the way when they are in doubt; to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever. (3.) *He is my salvation*, in whom I am safe, and by whom I shall be saved. (2.) *He is the strength of my life*; not only the protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the strength of my frail, weak life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away. God, that is a believer's life, in the strength of his life; not only by whom, but in whom he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen ourselves.

2. With what an undaunted courage he triumphs over his enemies; no fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? *Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?* If omnipotence be his guide, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his light, he fears no shades; if God be his salvation, he fears no colours. He triumphs over his enemies that were already routed, *ver. 2.* His enemies came up to him to eat up his flesh; aiming at no less, and assured of that; but they fell; not he smote them and they fell, but they stumbled and fell; they were so confounded and weakened that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus they that came to take Christ, with a word's speaking were made to stagger and fall to the ground, *John xviii. 6.* The ruin of some of the enemies of God's people is an earnest of the complete conquest of them all. And therefore these being fallen, he is fearless of the rest; though they be numerous, an host of them, though they be daring, and their attempts threatening; though they encamp against me, an army against one man; though they wage war upon me, yet my heart shall not fear. Hosts cannot hurt us, if the Lord of hosts protects us: nay, in this assurance that God is for me, *I will be confident.* Two things he will be confident of; (1.) That he shall be safe, if God is my salvation, *in the time of trouble he shall hide me*, *i. e.* He shall set me out of danger and above the fear of it. God will not only find out a shelter for his people in distress as he did, *Jer. xxxvi. 26.* but he will himself be their hiding-place, *Psal. xxxii. 7.* His providence shall, it may be, keep them safe; however his grace shall make them easy. His name is the strong tower into which by faith they run. *Prov. xviii. 10.* He shall hide me, not in the strongholds of Engedi, *1 Sam. xiii. 29.* but in the secret of his tabernacle. The gracious presence of God with him, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his spirit in the hearts of his people; these are the secret of his tabernacle; and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them up upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes; nay, it sets them up upon a rock on high, where the raging, threatening billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them: it is a rock that is higher than we, *Psal. lxi. 2.* (2.) That



(2.) That he should be victorious, *ver. 6.* *Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies*; not only so as though they cannot reach it with their darts, but so as that I shall be exalted to bear rule over them. David here by faith in the promise of God triumphs before the victory, and is as sure not only of the laurel, but of the crown, as if it were already upon his head.

3. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, *ver. 4.* It greatly encouraged his confidence in God that he was conscious to himself of entire affection to God, and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element when in the way of his duty, and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with him. If our hearts can witness for us that we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own. Or it may be taken thus. He desired to dwell in the house of the Lord, that there he might be safe from his enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he doth not say *one thing have I desired* in order to my safety that I may have my army augmented to such a number, or that I may be master of such a city or such a castle; but that *I may dwell in the house of the Lord*, and then I am well.

Observe, (1.) What it is he desires, *to dwell in the house of the Lord.* In the courts of God's house the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. As disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was, would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging among them. Or rather he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the public service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required. And therefore he longed to see an end of the wars in which he was now engaged; not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for that constant attendance on God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health, not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might go up to the house of the Lord, *Isa. xxxviii. 22.* Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry but for a night; or to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abideth not in the house for ever; but to dwell there all the days of their life: for there the Son abideth ever. Do we hope that the praising God will be the blessedness of our time; let us adopt David's desire.

(2.) How earnestly he covets this, this is the *one thing I have desired of the Lord*, and which I will seek after. If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should be it; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift and a token of favour. And having fixed his desire upon this as the one thing needful, he sought after it, *i. e.* he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affair, so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, They that truly desire communion with God, will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, *Prov. xviii. 1.*

(3.) What he had in his eye in it: He would dwell in God's house, not for the plenty of good entertainment that there was in the feasts upon the sacrifices, not for the music and good singing that was there, but *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.* He desired to attend in God's courts. (1.) That he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the Divine Being and perfection; his holiness is his beauty; *Psal. cx. 3.* His goodness is his beauty; *Zeck. ix. 17.* The harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love we with pleasure behold this beauty, and behold more and more in it that is amiable, that is admirable: when, with fixedness of thought and a holy flame of devout affection, we contemplate God's glorious excellencies, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us; this is that view of the beauty of the Lord which David here covets; and it is to be had in his ordinance, for there he manifests himself. (2.) That he might have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would inquire in God's temple, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* For the sake of these two things, he desired that one thing, *to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life*; for blessed are they that do so, they will be still praising him, *Psal. lxxiv. 4.* both in speaking to him, and in hearing from him. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word, Christ calls the one thing needful, and the good part.

(4.) What advantage he promised himself by it, could he but have a place in God's house. (1.) There he should be quiet and easy: there troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles would not reach him, for he should be set on high, *ver. 5.* Joash one of David's seed, was hid in the house of the Lord six years, and there not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, *2 Kings, xi. 3.* The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, *Neh. vi. 10.* But the safety of believers is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple, and their comfort in communion with him. (2.) There he should be pleasant and merry: there he would offer sacrifices of joy, *ver. 6.* For God's work is its own wages, there he would sing, *yea, he would sing praises to the Lord.* Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy, ought to be the matter of our praise. And when we attend upon God in holy ordinances, we ought to be much in joy and praise. It is for the glory of our God, that we should sing in his ways. And whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praises, *Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph, 2 Cor. ii. 11.*

7. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face: my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. 9. Hide not thy face far from me, put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. 10. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. 11. Teach me thy way O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies. 12. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies; for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. 13. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say on the LORD.

David in these verses expresses,

1. His desire towards God in many petitions: if he cannot now go up to

the house of the Lord, yet wherever he is he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer. (1.) He humbly speaks, because he firmly believes he shall have a gracious audience: *Hear, O Lord, when I cry*, not only with my heart, but as one in earnest with my voice too; and an answer of peace; which he expects not from his own merit, but God's goodness. *Have mercy upon me, and answer me, ver. 7.* If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.

(2.) He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to his duty, *ver. 8.* It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance, unless he hold forth to us the golden sceptre. David therefore going to pray, doth in his thoughts fasten upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and doth as it were reverently touch the top of the golden sceptre, which was thereby held out to him. *My heart said unto thee* (so it begins in the original) or of thee, *Seek ye my face*; he first resolved that, and preached that over again to himself, (and that is the best preaching, it is hearing twice what God speaks once) thou saidst, (so it may be supplied) *Seek ye my face*; and then he returns what he had so meditated upon this pious resolution, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* Observe here, (1.) The true nature of religious worship, it is seeking the face of God; that it is God's precept, *seek ye my face.* He would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good: and thus it is the saint's purpose and desire, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, and nothing less will I take up with. The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things; *Psal. cxlv. 16.* but it is only the shining of his face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* (2.) The kind invitation of a gracious God to this duty, thou saidst, *Seek ye my face*, it is not only a permission but a precept; and his commanding us to seek implies a promise of finding; for he is too kind to say, *seek ye me in vain.* God calls us to seek his face in our conversion to him and in our converse with him. He calls us by the whispers of his Spirit to and with our spirits to seek his face; calls us by his word, by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities, God is in love to us, calling us in him to seek our own mercies. (3.) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation: the call is presently returned, *my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* The call was general, *Seek ye my face*, but, like David we must apply it to ourselves, *I will seek it.* The word doth us no good when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, *Seek ye my face*: the answer is express, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*; like that *Jer. iii. 22. Behold, we come unto thee.* A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God; being made willing in the day of his power.

(3.) He is very particular in his requests,

1. For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that, *ver. 9.* *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, in obedience to thy command, therefore *hide not thy face from me*, *i. e.* Let me never want the reviving sense of thy favour. Love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; *put not thy servant away in anger.* He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs, that however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell, but that?

2. For the continuance of his presence with him; thou hast been my help formerly, and *thou art the God of my salvation*; and therefore whither shall I go but to thee? *O leave me not, neither forsake me*, withdraw not the operations of thy power from me; for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good will to me, for then I am comfortless.

3. For the benefit of a divine conduct, *ver. 11.* *Teach me thy way, O Lord*, *i. e.* Give me to understand the meaning of thy providences towards me, and make them plain to me. And give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mistake it, but may walk rightly, and that I may not do it with hesitation, but may walk freely. It is not policy but plainness, that is downright honesty, that will direct us into and keep us in the way of our duty. He begs to be guided in a plain path, because of his enemies; or, as the margin reads it, his observers. His enemies watched for his halting, that they might find occasion against him. Saul eyed David, *1 Sam. xviii. 9.* This quickened him to pray, *Lord, lead me in a plain path*, that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge.

(4.) For the benefit of a divine protection, *ver. 12.* *Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies.* Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less, and in such a way, as that I have no fence against them but thy power over their consciences; for *false witnesses are risen up against me*, that aim farther than to take away my reputation or estate, for they breathe out cruelty, it is the blood, the precious blood, they thirst after. Herein David was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty; but though he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over into their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

2. He expresses his dependence upon God:

1. That he would help and succour him, when all other helps and succours failed him, *ver. 10.* *When my father and mother forsake me*, *i. e.* the nearest and dearest friends I have in the world, from whom I may expect most relief, and with most reason, when they either die or are at a distance from me, or are disabled to help me in the time of need, or are unkind to me, or unmindful of me, and will not help me; when I am as helpless as ever poor orphan was, that was left fatherless and motherless, then I know the *LORD will take me up*, as a poor wandering sheep is taken up and saved from perishing. His time to help those that trust in him, is when all other helpers fail, when it is most for his honour and their comfort: with him the fatherless find mercy. This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the special care of the divine providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them, that way that one would not have expected it. God is a surer and a better friend than our earthly parents are or can be.

2. That in due time he should see the displays of his goodness, *ver. 13.* He believed he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and if he had not done so, he should have fainted under his affliction. Even the best saints are subject to faint when their troubles become grievous and tedious; their spirits are overwhelmed and their flesh and heart fail; but then faith is a sovereign cordial, it keeps them from desponding under their burden, and despair of relief, keeps them hoping and praying and waiting, and keeps them up in good thoughts of God, and the comfortable enjoyments of themselves. But what was it, the belief of which kept David from fainting; *That he should see the goodness of the Lord*, which now seemed at a distance. They that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord, shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. This he hopes to see in the land of the living, *i. e.* (1.) In this world, that he would outlive his troubles and not perish under them. It is his comfort not to much that he shall see the land of the living, as that he shall see the goodness of God in it; for that is the comfort of all creature comforts to a gracious soul. (2.) In the land of Canaan and in Jerusalem where the lively oracles were; in comparison



In these verses,

1. David produceth a farther evidence of his integrity, which was the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, and the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and double-dealers may indeed be found attendant on God's ordinances, the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican; but it is a good sign of sincerity if we attend upon them, as David here tells us he did, ver. 6, 7, 8.

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances. *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the place he had among those that compassed God's altar. I will wash, and so will I compass thine altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome. This is like that, 1 Cor. xi. 28. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat: so prepared. This notes, (1.) Habitual preparation; *I will wash mine hands in innocency, &c.* I will fully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those dead works which defile it, and forbid my drawing nigh to God. See *Psal.* xxiv. 3. 4. (2.) Actual preparation. It alludes to the ceremony of the priests washing when they went into minister, *Exod.* xxx. 20, 21. Though David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparations for solemn ordinances, we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reigning infidelity and hypocrisy, and to protest our innocency of that, (which was signified by *washing the hands*, *Deut.* xxi. 6.) but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity by renewing our repentance, and making a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences, for the purifying and pacifying of them. He that is washed, that is in a justified state, has need thus to *wash his feet*, *John* xiii. 10. to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency: he that is penitent is (*pen. innocens*) almost innocent, and he that is pardoned is so far innocent that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them: *I will compass thine altar:* alluding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering walked round the altar, and probably the offerers likewise did so at some distance, noting a diligent regard to what was done and a dutiful attendance on the service. *I will compass it, &c.* I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them. David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, yet thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars, and could find time for that attendance. Note, (1.) All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands, and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our altar, not as the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of, and live upon, *Heb.* xiii. 10. (2.) It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed, and to see ourselves among them that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances he aimed at the glory of God, and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the place of worship, as the place where God's honour dwelt, ver. 8. and therefore made it his business there to honour God, and to give him the glory due to his name: to publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's wondrous works: God's gracious works, which call for our thanksgiving, are all wondrous works which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them, and tell of them for his glory, and excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving, as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all ways possible to acknowledge with gratitude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight, and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this he appeals to God, Lord, thou knowest how dearly *I have loved the habitation of thy house*, ver. 8. *i. e.* the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people, and receive their homage, the place where thy honour dwells. David was sometimes forced by persecution into the countries of idolaters, and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors, that laid him under that restraint, did themselves upbraid him with as his crime. See *1 Sam.* xx. 27. But, Lord, faith he, though I cannot come to the habitation of thine house, I love it, my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there. Note, All that truly love God, truly love the ordinances of God, and therefore love them, because in them he manifests his honour, and they have an opportunity of honouring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him: he loved the habitation of his house, *i. e.* his church among men, loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it. And those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching to him, as a thing itself is a constant pleasure, so it is to them a comfortable evidence of their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

2. David having given proofs of his integrity, doth with a humble confidence towards God, (such as they have whose hearts condemn them not) earnestly pray that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked, ver. 9. 10. *Gather not my soul with sinners.* Here, (1.) David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable, that he could not wish the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. They are bloody men, that thirst after blood, and lie under a great deal of the guilt of blood. They do mischief, and mischief is always in their hands: though they get by their wickedness, for their right hand is full of bribes which they have taken to pervert justice, yet that will make the case never the better; for *what is a man profited if he gain the world, and lose his soul?* (2.) He dreads having his lot with them; he never loved them, nor associated with them in this world, and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered to return to God that gave them, and will call for them again. See *Job* xxxiv. 14. It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners; whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are, *1 Sam.* xxv. 29. or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, *Matt.* xiii. 30. Death gathers us to our people; those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with, and with whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot to eternity. Baalam desired to die the death of the righteous, David dreaded dying the death of the wicked; so that both lives are of that mind, which if we be of and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor eat of their dainties, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

3. David with a holy humble confidence commits himself to the grace of God, ver. 11, 12. (1.) He promiseth that by the grace of God he would persevere in his duty: *As for me, whatever others do, I will walk in mine integrity.* Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us, that we have walked in our integrity, is comfortable to us, that should confirm our resolutions to continue therein. (2.) He prays for the divine grace, both to enable to do so, and to give him the comfort of it: Redeem me

out of the hands of my enemies, and be merciful to me, living and dying. Be we never so confident of our integrity; yet still we must rely upon God's mercy, and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them. (3.) He pleaseth himself with his steadiness; *My foot stands in an even place*, where I shall not stumble, and whence I shall not fall. This he speaks as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world; and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world. (4.) He promiseth himself that he should be furnished with matter for praise, that he should have a heart for praises; and that though he was now perhaps banished from public ordinances, yet he should again have an opportunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evil doers shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous, and join with them in praising God: An it is pleasant doing that in good company, the more the better, it is the liker to heaven.

## P S A L M XXVII.

Some think David penned this psalm before his coming to the throne, when he was in the midst of his troubles, and perhaps upon occasion of the death of his parents; but the Jews think he penned it when he was old, upon occasion of that wonderful deliverance he had from the sword of the giant, when Abishai succoured him. *2 Sam.* xxi. 16, 17. and his people thereupon resolved he should never venture his life again in battle, lest he should quench the light of Israel. Perhaps it was not penned upon any particular occasion; but it is very expressive of the pious and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out towards God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is, (1.) The courage and holy bravery of his faith, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The complacency he took in communion with God, and the benefit he experienced by it, ver. 4, 5, 6. (3.) His desire towards God, and his favour and grace, ver. 7—9—11, 12. (4.) His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others to hope in him, ver. 10—13, 11. And let our hearts be thus affected in singing this psalm.

## A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **T**HE LORD is my light, and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 2. When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me, to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. 3. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. 4. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. 5. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me up upon a rock. 6. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

We may observe here,

1. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him. (1.) *The Lord is my light*, David's subjects called him the light of Israel, *2 Sam.* xxi. 17. And he was indeed a burning and a shining light: but he owns that he shone as the moon doth with a borrowed light; what light God darted upon him, reflected upon them: *The Lord is my light.* God is a light to his people, to show them the way when they are in doubt; to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever. (3.) *He is my salvation*, in whom I am safe, and by whom I shall be saved. (2.) *He is the strength of my life*; not only the protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the strength of my frail, weak life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away. God, that is a believer's life, in the strength of his life; not only by whom, but in whom he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen ourselves.

2. With what an undaunted courage he triumphs over his enemies; no fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? *Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?* If omnipotence be his guide, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his light, he fears no shades; if God be his salvation, he fears no colours. He triumphs over his enemies that were already routed, ver. 2. His enemies came up to him to eat up his flesh: aiming at no less, and assured of that; but they fell; not he smote them and they fell, but they stumbled and fell; they were so confounded and weakened that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus they that came to take Christ, with a word's speaking were made to stagger and fall to the ground, *John* xviii. 6. The ruin of some of the enemies of God's people is an earnest of the complete conquest of them all. And therefore these being fallen, he is fearless of the rest; though they be numerous, an host of them, though they be daring, and their attempts threatening; though they encamp against me, an army against one man; though they wage war upon me, yet my heart shall not fear. Hosts cannot hurt us, if the Lord of hosts protects us: nay, in this assurance that God is for me, *I will be confident.* Two things he will be confident of; (1.) That he shall be safe, if God is my salvation, *in the time of trouble he shall hide me*, *i. e.* He shall set me out of danger and above the fear of it. God will not only find out a shelter for his people in distress as he did, *Jer.* xxxvi. 26. but he will himself be their hiding-place. *Psal.* xxxii. 7. His providence shall, it may be, keep them safe: however his grace shall make them easy. His name is the strong tower into which by faith they run. *Prov.* xviii. 10. He shall hide me, not in the strongholds of Engedi, *1 Sam.* xxiii. 29. but in the secret of his tabernacle. The gracious presence of God with him, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people; these are the secret of his tabernacle; and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them up upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes; nay, it sets them up upon a rock on high, where the raging, threatening billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them: it is a rock that is *higher than we*, *Psal.* lxi. 2. (2.) That



(2.) That he should be victorious, *ver. 6. Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies*; not only so as though they cannot reach it with their darts, but so as that I shall be exalted to bear rule over them. David here by faith in the promise of God triumphs before the victory, and is as sure not only of the laurel, but of the crown, as if it were already upon his head.

3. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, *ver. 4.* It greatly encouraged his confidence in God that he was conscious to himself of entire affection to God, and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element when in the way of his duty, and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with him. If our hearts can witness for us that we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own. Or it may be taken thus. He desired to dwell in the house of the Lord, that there he might be safe from his enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he doth not say *one thing have I desired* in order to my safety that I may have my army augmented to such a number, or that I may be master of such a city or such a castle; but that *I may dwell in the house of the Lord*, and then I am well.

Observe, (1.) What it is he desires, *to dwell in the house of the Lord.* In the courts of God's house the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. As disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was, would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging among them. Or rather he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the public service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required. And therefore he longed to see an end of the wars in which he was now engaged; not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for that constant attendance on God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health, not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might go up to the house of the Lord, *Ira. xxxviii. 22.* Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry but for a night; or to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abideth not in the house for ever: but to dwell there all the days of their life: for there the Son abideth ever. Do we hope that the praising God will be the blessedness of our time; let us adopt David's desire.

(2.) How earnestly he covets this, this is the *one thing I have desired of the Lord*, and which I will seek after. If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should be it; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift and a token of favour. And having fixed his desire upon this as the one thing needful, he sought after it, *i. e.* he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affair, so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, They that truly desire communion with God, will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, *Prov. xviii. 1.*

(3.) What he had in his eye in it: He would dwell in God's house, not for the plenty of good entertainment that there was in the feasts upon the sacrifices, not for the music and good singing that was there, but *to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple.* He desired to attend in God's courts. (1.) That he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the Divine Being and perfection; his holiness is his beauty; *Psal. cx. 3.* His goodness is his beauty; *Zeck. ix. 17.* The harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love we with pleasure behold this beauty, and behold more and more in it that is amiable, that is admirable: when, with fixedness of thought and a holy flame of devout affection, we contemplate God's glorious excellencies, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us; this is that view of the beauty of the Lord which David here covets; and it is to be had in his ordinance, for there he manifests himself. (2.) That he might have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would *enquire in God's temple.* Lord, *what wilt thou have me to do?* For the sake of these two things, he desired that *one thing, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life*; for blessed are they that do so; they will be still praising him, *Psal. lxxiv. 4.* both in speaking to him, and in hearing from him. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word, Christ calls the *one thing needful*, and the good part.

(4.) What advantage he promised himself by it, could he but have a place in God's house. (1.) There he should be quiet and easy: there troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles would not reach him, for he should be set on high, *ver. 5.* Joash one of David's seed, was hid in the house of the Lord six years, and there not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, *2 Kings, xi. 3.* The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, *Neh. vi. 10.* But the safety of believers is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple, and their comfort in communion with him. (2.) There he should be pleasant and merry: there he would offer sacrifices of joy, *ver. 6.* For God's work is its own wages, there he would sing, *yea, he would sing praises to the Lord.* Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy, ought to be the matter of our praise. And when we attend upon God in holy ordinances, we ought to be much in joy and praise. It is for the glory of our God, that we should sing in his ways. And whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praises. *Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph, 2 Cor. ii. 11.*

7. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. 8. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face: my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek. 9. Hide not thy face far from me, put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. 10. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. 11. Teach me thy way O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies: 12. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies; for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty. 13. I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say on the LORD.

David in these verses expresses,

1. His desire towards God in many petitions: if he cannot now go up to

the house of the Lord, yet wherever he is he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer. (1.) He humbly speaks, because he firmly believes he shall have a gracious audience: *Hear, O Lord, when I cry*, not only with my heart, but as one in earnest with my voice too; and an answer of peace; which he expects not from his own merit, but God's goodness. *Have mercy upon me, and answer me, ver. 7.* If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.

(2.) He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to his duty, *ver. 8.* It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance, unless he hold forth to us the golden sceptre. David therefore going to pray, doth in his thoughts fasten upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and doth as it were reverently touch the top of the golden sceptre, which was thereby held out to him. *My heart said unto thee* (so it begins in the original) or of thee, Seek ye my face; he first resolved that, and preached that over again to himself, (and that is the best preaching, it is hearing twice what God speaks once) thou saidst, (so it may be supplied) Seek ye my face; and then he returns what he had so meditated upon this pious resolution, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* Observe here, (1.) The true nature of religious worship, it is seeking the face of God; that it is God's precept, *seek ye my face.* He would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good; and thus it is the saint's purpose and desire, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, and nothing less will I take up with. The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things, *Psal. cxlv. 16.* but it is only the shining of his face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, *Psal. iv. 6, 7.* (2.) The kind invitation of a gracious God to this duty, thou saidst, Seek ye my face, it is not only a permission but a precept; and his commanding us to seek implies a promise of finding; for he is too kind to say, *seek ye me in vain.* God calls us to seek his face in our conversion to him and in our converse with him. He calls us by the whispers of his Spirit to and with our spirits to seek his face; calls us by his word, by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities, God is in love to us, calling us in him to seek our own mercies. (3.) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation: the call is presently returned, *my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.* The call was general, Seek ye my face, but, like David we must apply it to ourselves, I will seek it. The word doth us no good when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, *Seek ye my face*: the answer is express, *Thy face, Lord, will I seek*; like that *Jer. iii. 22. Behold, we come unto thee.* A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

(3.) He is very particular in his requests, 1. For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that, *ver. 9. Thy face, Lord, will I seek*, in obedience to thy command, therefore *hide not thy face from me*, *i. e.* Let me never want the reviving sense of thy favour. Love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; *put not thy servant away in anger.* He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs, that however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell, but that?

2. For the continuance of his presence with him; thou hast been my help formerly, and *thou art the God of my salvation*; and I therefore whither shall I go but to thee? *O leave me not, neither forsake me*, withdraw not the operations of thy power from me; for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good will to me, for then I am comfortless.

3. For the benefit of a divine conduct, *ver. 11. Teach me thy way, O Lord*, *i. e.* Give me to understand the meaning of thy providences towards me, and make them plain to me. And give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mistake it, but may walk rightly, and that I may not do it with hesitation, but may walk freely. It is not policy but plainness, that is downright honesty, that will direct us into and keep us in the way of our duty. He begs to be guided in a plain path, because of his enemies; or, as the margin reads it, his observers. His enemies watched for his halting, that they might find occasion against him. Saul eyed David, *1 Sam. xviii. 9.* This quickened him to pray, Lord, lead me in a plain path, that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge.

(4.) For the benefit of a divine protection, *ver. 12. Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies.* Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less, and in such a way, as that I have no fence against them but thy power over their consciences; for *false witnesses are risen up against me*, that aim farther than to take away my reputation or estate, for they breathe out cruelty, it is the blood, the precious blood, they thirst after. Herein David was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty; but though he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over into their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

2. He expresseth his dependence upon God: 1. That he would help and succour him, when all other helps and succours failed him, *ver. 10. When my father and mother forsake me*, *i. e.* the nearest and dearest friends I have in the world, from whom I may expect most relief, and with most reason, when they either die or are at a distance from me, or are disabled to help me in the time of need, or are unkind to me; or unmindful of me, and will not help me, when I am as helpless as ever poor orphan was, that was left fatherless and motherless, then I know the Lord will take me up, as a poor wandering sheep is taken up and saved from perishing. His time to help those that trust in him, is when all other helpers fail, when it is most for his honour and their comfort: with him the fatherless find mercy. This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the special care of the divine providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them, that way that one would not have expected it. God is a surer and a better friend than our earthly parents are or can be.

2. That in due time he should see the displays of his goodness, *ver. 13.* He believed he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, and if he had not done so, he should have fainted under his affliction. Even the best saints are subject to faint when their troubles become grievous and tedious; their spirits are overwhelmed and their flesh and heart fail; but then faith is a sovereign cordial, it keeps them from desponding under their burden, and despair of relief, keeps them hoping and praying and waiting, and keeps them up in good thoughts of God, and the comfortable enjoyments of themselves. But what was it, the belief of which kept David from fainting; That he should see the goodness of the Lord, which now seemed at a distance. They that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord, shall in due time walk in the light of that goodness. This he hopes to see in the land of the living, *i. e.* (1.) In this world, that he would outlive his troubles and not perish under them. It is his comfort not so much that he shall see the land of the living, as that he shall see the goodness of God in it; for that is the comfort of all creature comforts to a gracious soul. (2.) In the land of Canaan and in Jerusalem where the lively oracles were; in comparison



comparison with the heathen that were dead in sin, the land of Israel might fitly be called the land of the living; there God was known, and there David hoped to see his goodness, see 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. Or, (3.) In heaven. It is that land alone that may truly be called the land of the living, where there is no more death, this earth is the land of the dying. No thing like the believing hope of eternal life, the fore-sights of that glory, and foretastes of these pleasures, to keep us from fainting under the calamities of this present time.

3. That in the mean time he should be strengthened to bear up under his burdens, ver. 14. whether he saith it to himself or to his friends, it comes all to one, this is that which encourageth him. He shall strengthen thy heart, shall sustain the spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength. (1.) Keep close to God and to your duty. Wait on the Lord by faith and prayer, and a humble resignation to his will, wait, I say on the Lord, whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God. (1.) Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties. Be of good courage: let your hearts be fixed trusting in God, and your minds stayed upon him, and then let none of these things move you. They that wait upon the Lord have reason to be of good courage.

# P S A L M XXVIII.

The former part of this psalm is the prayer of a saint militant, and now in distress, ver. 1—3. to which is added the doom of God's implacable enemies, ver. 4, 5. The latter part of this psalm is the thanksgiving of a saint triumphant, and delivered out of his distresses, ver. 6, 7, 8. to which is added a prophetic prayer for all God's faithful loyal subjects, ver. 9. So that it is hard to say which of these two conditions David was in when he penned it. Some think he was now in trouble seeking God, but at the same time preparing to praise him for his deliverance, and by faith giving him thanks for it before it was wrought. Others think he was now in triumph, but remembered and recorded for his own, and other's benefit, the prayers he made when he was in affliction, that the mercy might reign the better, when it appeared to be an answer to them.

## A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **U**NTO thee will I cry O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. 2. I hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee: when I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle. 3. Draw me not away with the wicked and with the workers of iniquity: which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. 4. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands: render to them their desert. 5. Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them and not build them up.

In these verses David is very earnest in prayer.

1. He prays that God would graciously hear and answer him, now in his distress he called upon him, ver. 1, 2. Observe his faith in prayer; O Lord my rock: noting his belief of God's power, he is a rock; and his dependence upon that power, he is my rock, on whom I build my hope. Observe his fervency in prayer; to thee will I cry, as one in earnest, being ready to sink unless thou come in with seasonable succour. And observe how solicitous he is to obtain an answer. Be not silent to me as one angry at my prayers, Psal. lxxx. 4. Lord, speak to me, answer me with good words and comfortable words. Zech. i. 13. Though the thing I pray for be not given in, yet let God speak to me joy and gladness, and make me to hear it. Lord, speak for me in answer to my prayers; plead my cause, command deliverances for me, and thus hear and answer the voice of my supplications.

Two things he pleads; (1.) The sad despair he should be in if God slighted him; if thou be silent to me, and I have not the tokens of thy favour, I am like them that go down into the pit, i. e. I am a dead man, lost and undone; if God be not my friend, appear not to me and appear not for me, my hope and my help is perished. Nothing can be so cutting, so killing to a gracious soul, as the want of God's favour and the sense of his displeasure, I shall be like them that go down to hell (so some understand it) for what is the misery of the damned but this, that God is forever silent to them and deaf to their cry? Those are in some measure qualified for God's favours, and may expect it, who are thus possessed with a dread of his wrath, and to whom his frowns are worse than death. (2.) The good hopes he had that God should favour him, I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle; which notes not only an earnest desire, but an earnest expectation from thence to receive an answer of peace. The most holy place within the veil is here, as elsewhere, called the oracle, there the ark and the mercy-seat were, there God was said to dwell between the cherubims, and thence he spake to his people, Num. vii. 89. That he was a type of Christ, and it is to him that we may lift up our eyes and hands, for through him all good comes from God to us. It was also a figure of heaven, Heb. ix. 24. And from God as our Father in heaven; we are taught to expect an answer to our prayers. The scriptures are called the oracles of God, and to them we must have an eye in our prayers and expectations. There is the word on which God had caused and encouraged us to hope.

2. He deprecates the doom of wicked people, as before, Psal. xxvi. 9. Gather not my soul with sinners. Lord, I attend thy holy oracle, draw me not away from that with the wicked, and the workers of iniquity, ver. 3. that is, 1. Save me from being entangled in the snares they have laid for me; they flatter and cajole me, and speak peace to me, but they have a design upon me, for mischief is in their heart, they aim to disturb me, nay to destroy me; Lord suffer men not to be drawn away and ruined by their cursed plots; for they have, can have, no power, no success against me, except it be given them from above. 2. Save me from being infected with their sins and from doing as they do: Let me not be drawn away by their fallacious arguments or their allurements, from thy holy oracle, where I desire to dwell all the days of my life, to practise any wicked works; see Psal. cxi. 4. Lord, never leave me to myself to use such arts of deceit and treachery for my safety, as they use for my ruin. Let no event of Providence be an invincible temptation to me, to draw me either to the imitation or into the interest of wicked people. Good men dread the way

of sinners; the best are sensible of the danger they are in of being drawn aside into it; and therefore we should all pray earnestly to God for his grace to keep us in our integrity. 3. Save me from being involved in their doom; let me not be led forth with the workers of iniquity, for I am none of them that speak peace while war is in their hearts. Note, Those that are careful not to partake with sinners in their sins have reason to hope that they shall not partake with them in their plagues, Rev. xviii. 4.

3. He imprecates the just judgments of God upon the workers of iniquity, ver. 4. Give them according to their deeds. That is not the language of passion or revenge; nor is inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. But (1.) Thus he would shew how far he was from complying with the workers of iniquity, and with what good reason he had begged not to be drawn away with them, because he was convinced that they could not be made more miserable than to be dealt with according to their deeds. (2.) Thus he would express his zeal for the honour of God's justice, in governing the world. Lord, they think all well they do, and justify themselves in their wicked practices; Lord, give them after the work of their hands, and so undeceive those about them, who think there is no harm in what they do, because it goes unpunished, Psal. xciv. 1, 2. (3.) This prayer is a prophecy, that God will sooner or later render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. If what has been done amiss be not undone by repentance, there will certainly come a reckoning day, when God will render to every man who persists in his evil deeds, according to them. It is a prophecy particularly of the destruction of destroyers. They speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts; Lord, give them according to their deeds, let the spoilers be spoiled, and let them be treacherously dealt with, who have thus dealt treacherously: see Isa. xxxiii. 1. and Rev. xviii. 4—xiii. 10. Observe, He foretells, that God will reward them not only according to their deeds, but according to the wickedness of their endeavours; for sinners shall be reckoned with not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they would have done, which they designed, and did what they could to effect. And if God go by this rule in dealing with the wicked, sure he will do so in dealing with the righteous, and will reward them not only for the good they have endeavoured to do, though they could not compass it.

4. He foretells their destruction for their contempt of God and his hand, ver. 5. Because they regard not the works of the Lord, and the operations of his hands, by which he manifests himself and speaks to the children of men; he shall destroy them in this world and in the other, and not build them up. Note, A stupid regardlessness of the works of God is the cause of the sin of sinners, and so becomes the cause of their ruin. Why do men question the being or attributes of God, but because they do not duly regard the bloody-works which declare his glory, and in which the invisible things of him are clearly seen? Why do men forget God and live without him, nay affront God and live in rebellion against him, but because they consider not the instances of that wrath of his, which is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them and devise mischief against them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for his church, by which he has made it appear how dear it is to him? see Isa. v. 12.

In singing this we must arm ourselves against all temptations to join with the workers of iniquity, and animate ourselves against all the troubles we may be threatened with by the workers of iniquity.

6. Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. 7. The LORD is my strength and my shield, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise him. 8. The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed. 9. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

In these verses,

1. David gives God thanks for the audience of his prayers, as affectionately as a few verses before he had begged it, ver. 6. Blessed be the Lord, How soon are the faint sorrows turned into songs, and their prayers into praise! It was in faith that David prayed, ver. 2. Hear the voice of my supplications: and by the same faith he gives thanks, ver. 6. that God heard the voice of his supplications. Note, (1.) They that pray in faith, may rejoice in hope. He hath heard me, i. e. graciously accepted me, and I am as sure of a real answer as if I had it already. (2.) What we win by prayer we must wear with praise; hath God heard our supplications? let us then bless his name.

2. He encourageth himself to hope in God for the perfecting of every thing that concerned him: having given to God the glory of his grace, ver. 6. he is humbly bold to take the comfort of it, ver. 7. This is the method of attaining peace, let it begin with praise that is attainable. Let us first bless God, and then bless ourselves. Observe, (1.) His dependence upon God: The Lord is my strength to support me, and carry me on through all my services and sufferings, he is my shield to protect me from all the malicious designs of my enemies against me. I have chosen him to be so, I have always found him so, and I expect he will still be so. (2.) His experience of the benefit of that dependence: My heart trusted in him, and in his power and promise, and it has not been in vain to do so, for I am helped, I have been helped many a time; not only God has given in to me in his due time the help I trusted to him for, but my very trust in him has helped me in the mean time, and kept me from fainting, Psal. xxvii. 13. The very actings of faith, are present aids to a drooping spirit and help it many a time at a dead lift. (3.) His improvement of this experience: He had the pleasure of it, therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth. The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while in the laughter of a fool the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory. The heart that truly believes shall in due time greatly rejoice; it is joy and peace in believing that we are to expect. God shall have the praise of it; when my heart greatly rejoiceth, with my song will I praise him. Thus must we express our gratitude, it is the least we can do; and others will hereby be invited and encouraged to trust in him too.

3. He pleaseth himself with the interest which all good people through Christ have in God, ver. 8. The Lord is their strength: Not mine only, but the strength of every believer. Note, The saints rejoice in their friends comforts as well as their own; for as we have not the less benefit by the light of the sun, so neither by the light of God's countenance, for others sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours; Christ their Lord and ours, 1 Cor. i. 2. He is their strength, and strength of all Israel, because he is the saving strength of his anointed, i. e. (1.) Of David in the type: God in strengthening him that was their king and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself



himself God's anointed, because it was the anction he had received that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore intitled him to the divine protection. (2.) Of Christ his Anointed, his Messiah, in the antitype. God was his saving strength, qualified him for his undertaking; and carried him through it: *See Psal. lxxxix. 21. Isa. xlix. 5.—7—9.* And so he becomes their strength, the strength of all the saints; he strengthened him that is the church's head, and from him diffuseth strength to all the members; has commanded his strength, and so *strengthens what he has wrought for us*, *Psalm lxxviii. 28. see Psal. lxxx. 17, 18.*

4. He concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer for the church of God, *ver. 9.* He prays for Israel, not as his people, save my people and bless mine inheritance, though they were so, but thine. God's interest in them lay nearer his heart than his own; *We are thy people*, is a good plea, *Isa. lxi. 9—lxiii. 19. I am thine, save me.* God's people are his inheritance, dear to him and precious in his eyes; what little glory he has from this world, he has from them. *The Lord's portion is his people.* That which he begs of God for them is, (1.) That he would save them from their enemies and the dangers they were exposed to. (2.) That he would bless them with all good flowing from his favour in performance of his promise, and amounting to a happiness for them. (3.) That he would feed them: bless them with plenty, and especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul. Rule them, so the margin. Direct their counsels and actions aright, and over rule their affairs for good. Feed them and rule them, *i. e.* set pastors, set rulers over them that shall do their office with wisdom and understanding. (4.) That he would lift them up for ever: lift them up out of their troubles and distresses: and do this not only for those of that age, but for his people in every age to come, even to the end. Lift them up into thy glorious kingdom, lift them up as high as heaven. There, and there only, will the saints be lifted up for ever, never more to sink or be depressed. Observe, Those, and those only, whom God feeds and rules, that are willing to be taught, and guided, and governed by him, shall be saved, and blessed, and lifted up for ever.

P S A L M XXIX.

*It is the probable conjecture of some very good interpreters, that David penned this psalm upon occasion and just at the time of a great storm of thunder, lightning and rain: as the eighth psalm was his meditation in a moon-shine night, and the nineteenth in a sun-shine morning. It is good to take occasion from the sensible operations of God's power in the kingdom of nature, to give glory to him. So composed was David and so cheerful even in a dreadful tempest, when others trembled, that then he penned this psalm; for though the earth be removed yet will we not fear. (1.) He calls upon the great ones of the world to give glory to God, *ver. 1; 2.* (2.) To convince them of the greatness of that God whom they were to adore, he takes notice of his power and terror in the thunder and lightning, and thunder showers, *ver. 3—6.* His sovereign dominion over the world, *ver. 10.* and his special favour to his church, *ver. 11.* Great and high thoughts of God should fill us in singing this psalm.*

¶ A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **G**IVE unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 2. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 3. The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: The God of glory thundereth, the LORD is upon many waters. 4. The voice of the LORD is powerful: the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. 5. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars: yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. 6. He maketh them also to skip like a calf: Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. 7. The voice of the LORD divided the flames of fire: 8. The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. 9. The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory. 10. The Lord sitteth upon the flood: yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever. 11. The LORD will give strength unto his people, the LORD will bless his people with peace.

In this psalm we have,

1. A demand of the homage of the great men of the earth to be paid to the great God: Every clap of thunder David interpreted as a call to himself and other princes to give glory to the great God. Observe, (1.) Who are they that are called to this duty; *O ye mighty*, *ver. 1.* ye sons of the mighty; that have power, and on whom that power is devolved by succession and inheritance, that have royal blood running in your veins. It is much for the honour of the great God, that the great men of this world should pay their homage to him; and they are bound to do it, not only because high as they are he is infinitely above them, and therefore they must vail to him; but because they have their power from him, and are to use it for him, and this tribute of acknowledgment they owe to him for it. (2.) How often this call is repeated; *Give unto the Lord*, and again, and a third time, *Give unto the Lord*. This intimates, that the mighty men are backward to this duty, and are hardly persuaded to it; but that it is of great consequence to the interest of God's kingdom among men, that princes should heartily espouse them. Jerusalem flourisheth when the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it, *Rev. xvi. 24.* (3.) What they are called to: To give unto the Lord; not as if he needed anything, or could be benefited by any gift of ours, or as if we had any thing to give him that is not his own already. *Who hath first given to him?* but the recognition of his glory, and of his dominion over us he is pleased to interpret to him as a gift. *Give unto the Lord*, your own selves in the first place, and then your services; *give unto the Lord glory and strength*, *i. e.* acknowledge his glory and strength, and give praise to him as a God of infinite majesty and irresistible power; and what glory and strength he has by his providence intrusted you with, offer it to him, to be used for his honour in his service. Give him your crowns, let them be laid at his feet; give him your sceptres, your swords, your keys, put all into his hand, that you in the use of them may be to him for a name and a praise. Princes value themselves by their glory and strength, these they must ascribe to God, owning him to be infinitely more glorious and powerful than they.

This demand of homage from the mighty, may be looked upon as directed either to the grandees of David's own kingdom, the peers of the realm, to the princes of the tribes, and it is to excite them to a more diligent and constant attendance at God's altars, in which he had observed them very remiss; or to the neighbouring kings, whom he had by his sword made tributaries to Israel, and now would persuade to become tributaries to the God of Israel. Crowned heads must bow before the King of kings. What is here said to the mighty, is said to all, worship God; it is the sum and substance of the everlasting gospel, *Rev. xiv. 6, 7.* Now we have here, (1.) The nature of religious worship, it is *giving to the Lord the glory due to his name*, *ver. 2.* God's name is that whereby he has made himself known. There is a glory due to his name; it is impossible we should give him all the glory due to his name; when we have said and done our best for the honour of God's name, still we come infinitely short of the merit of the subject: but when we answer that revelation which he has made of himself with suitable affections and adorations, then we give him some of that glory which is due to his name. If we would in hearing and praying, and other acts of devotion, receive grace from God, we must make it our business to give glory to God. (2.) The rule of the performance of religious exercises; *worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*. Which speaks, (1.) The object of our worship; the glorious majesty of God is called the beauty of holiness, *2 Chron. xx. 21.* In the worship of God we must have an eye to his beauty, and adore him not only as infinitely awful, and therefore to be feared above all, but as infinitely amiable, and therefore to be loved and delighted in above all; especially we must have an eye to the beauty of his holiness: this the angels fasten upon in their praises, *Rev. iv. 8.* Or, (2.) The place of worship. The sanctuary then was the *beauty of holiness*, *Psal. xlviii. 1, 2. Jer. xvii. 12.* The beauty of the sanctuary was the exact agreeableness of the worship there performed with the divine appointment; the pattern in the mount. Now under the gospel solemn assemblies of christians (which purity is the beauty of) are the places where God is to be worshipped. Or, (3.) The manner of worship. We must be holy in all our religious performances, *i. e.* devoted to God, and to his will and glory. There is beauty in holiness, and it is that that puts an acceptable beauty upon all the acts of worship.

2. Good reason given for this demand. We shall see ourselves bound to give glory to God, if we consider, (1.) His sufficiency in himself, intimated in his name, *Jehovah I am, that I am*; which is repeated here no less than eighteen times in this short psalm, twice in every verse but three, and once in two of those three; I think there is not the like in all the book of psalms. Let the mighty ones of the earth know him by this name, and give him the glory due to it. (2.) His sovereignty over all things. Let those that rule over men, know there is a God that rules over them, that rules over all. The psalmist here set forth God's dominion.

1. In the kingdom of nature: In the wonderful effects of natural causes, and the operations of the powers of nature, we ought to take notice of God's glory and strength, which we are called upon to ascribe to him; in the thunder and lightning, and rain, we may see,

1. His glory. It is the God of glory that thundereth, *ver. 3.* It is God that thunders, it is the noise of his voice, *Job xxxvii. 2.* and it speaks him as a God of glory; so awful is the sound of the thunder, and so bright the flash of its companion the lightning; to the hearing and to the sight nothing more affecting than these, as if by those two learning senses God would give such proofs of his glory to the minds of men, as should leave the most stupid inexcusable. And some observe, that there were then some particular reasons why thunder should be called the voice of the Lord, not only because it comes from above, is not under the direction or foresight of any man, speaks loud, and reaches far; but because God often spake in thunder, particularly at mount Sinai, and by thunder discomfited the enemies of Israel. To speak it the voice of the God of glory, it is here said to be upon the waters, upon many waters, *ver. 3.* it reacheth over the vast ocean, the waters under the firmament; it rattles among the thick clouds, the waters that are above the firmament. Every one that hears the thunder, his ears being made to tingle with it, will own that *the voice of the Lord is full of majesty*, *Psal. xxix. 4.* enough to make the highest humble, for none can thunder with a voice like him, and proudest tremble: for if his voice be so terrible, what is his arm? Every time we hear it thunder, let our hearts be thereby filled with great, and high, and honourable thoughts of God, in the holy adorings and adorations of whom the power of godliness doth so much consist. *O Lord our God, thou art very great!*

2. His power, *ver. 4.* *The voice of the Lord is powerful*, as appears by the effects of it; for it works wonders; they that write natural histories relate the prodigious effects of thunder and lightning, even out of the ordinary course of natural causes, which must be referred into the omnipotence of the God of nature. (1.) Trees have been rent and split by thunderbolts, *ver. 5, 6.* *The voice of the Lord* in the thunder often broke the cedars, even those of Lebanon, the strongest, the stateliest. Some understand it of the violent winds, which shook the cedars, and sometimes tore off their aspiring tops. Earthquakes also shook the ground itself on which trees grew, and made Lebanon and Sirion to dance, the wilderness of Kadesh also was in like manner shaken, *ver. 8.* the trees by winds, the ground by earthquakes, and both by thunders, of which I incline rather to understand it. The learned Dr. Hammond understands it of the consternation and conquest of the neighbour kingdoms that warred with Israel, and opposed David; as the Syrians, whose country lay near the forest of Lebanon, the Amorites that bordered on mount Hermon; and the Moabites and Ammonites that lay about the wilderness of Kadesh. (2.) Fires have been kindled by lightnings, and houses and churches thereby consumed; hence we read of hot thunderbolts, *Psal. lxxviii. 48.* accordingly the voice of the Lord in the thunder, is here said to *divide flames of fire*, *ver. 7.* *i. e.* to scatter them upon the earth, as God sees fit to direct them, and do execution by them. (3.) The terror of thunder makes the hinds to calve sooner, and some think easier than otherwise they would. The hind is a timorous creature, and much affected with the noise of thunder; and no marvel, when sometimes proud and stout men have been made to tremble at it. The emperor Caligula would hide himself under his bed when it thundered. Horace the poet owns that he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, which he describes somewhat like it here, *lib. i. ode 34.* The thunder is here said to *discover the forest*, *i. e.* to terrify the wild beasts of the forest, that they quit the dens and thickets in which they hid themselves, and so are discovered. Or it throws down the trees, and so discovers the ground that was shaded by them. Whenever it thunders let us think of this psalm; and whenever we sing this psalm, let us think of the dreadful thunder-claps we have sometimes heard, and thus bring God's word and his works together, that by both we may be directed and quickened to give unto him the glory due unto his name; and let us bless him that there is another voice of his besides this dreadful one, by which God now speaks to us, even the still small voice of his gospel, the terror of which shall make us afraid.

2. In the kingdom of providence, *ver. 10.* God is to be praised as the governor of the world of mankind. He sits upon the flood, he sits king for ever



ever. He not only sits at rest in the enjoyment of himself, but he sits as king in the throne which he has prepared in the heavens, *Psalm*. ciii. 17, where he takes cognizance of and gives orders about all the affairs of the children of men, and doth all according to his will, according to the counsel of his will. Observe, (1.) The power of his kingdom: He sits upon the flood. As he has founded the earth, so he hath founded his own throne upon the floods, *Psalm*. xxiv. 2. The ebbs and flowings of this lower world, and the tosses and revolutions of the affairs in it, give not the least shake to the repose or to the counsels of the eternal mind. The opposition of his enemies is compared to the floods, *Psalm*. xciii. 3, 4. but the Lord sits upon it, i. e. he crusheth it, conquers it and completes his own purpose, in despite of all the devices that are in men's hearts. The word, here translated the flood, is never used but concerning Noah's flood; and therefore some think that it is that is here spoken of. God did sit upon that flood, as a judge executing the sentence of his justice upon the world of the ungodly that was swept away by it: And he still sits upon the flood, restrains the waters of Noah, that they turn not again to cover the earth, according to his promise never to destroy the earth any more by a flood, *Gen.* ix. 11. *Isa.* liv. 9. (2.) The perpetuity of his kingdom: He sits King for ever, no period can or shall be put to his government. The administration of his kingdom is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and pursuant to his designs for eternity.

3. In the kingdom of grace: here his glory shines brightest, (1.) In the adoration he receives from the subjects of that kingdom, *ver.* 9. In his temple, where his people attend his discoveries of himself and his mind, and attend him with their praises, there doth every one speak of his glory; in the world every man sees it, or at least may behold it afar off, *Job* xxxvi. 25. but it is only in the temple, in the church it is spoken of to his honour. All his works do praise him, i. e. They minister matter for praise, but his saints only do bless him, and speak of his glory in his works, *Psalm*. cxlv. 10. (2.) In the favour he bestows upon the subjects of that kingdom, *ver.* 11. (1.) He will enable them for his service; he will give strength to his people, to fortify them against every evil work, and to furnish them for every good work; out of weakness they shall be made strong; nay, he will perfect strength in weakness. (2.) He will encourage them in his service. He will bless his people with peace. Peace is a blessing of inestimable value which God designs for all his people. The work of righteousness is peace, great peace have they that love thy law; but much more the crown of righteousness; the end of the righteous is peace, it is endless peace. When the thunder of God's wrath shall make sinners tremble, the saints shall lift up their heads with joy.

# P S A L M XXX.

This is a psalm of thanksgiving for the great deliverances which God had wrought for David, penned upon occasion of the dedicating of his house of cedar, and sung in that pious solemnity, though there is not any thing in it that has particular reference to that occasion. Some collect from divers passages in the psalm itself that it was penned upon his recovery from a dangerous fit of sickness, which might happen to be about the time of the dedication of his house. (1.) He here praiseth God for the deliverances he had wrought for him, *ver.* 1, 2, 3. (2.) He calls upon others to praise him too, and encourageth them to trust in him, *ver.* 4, 5. (3.) He blames himself for his former security, *ver.* 6, 7. (4.) He recollects the prayers and complaints he had made in his distress, *ver.* 8, 9, 10. And with them stirs up himself to be very thankful to God for the present comfortable change, *ver.* 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we ought to remember with thankfulness any like deliverances wrought for us, for which we must stir up ourselves to praise him, and by which we must be engaged to depend upon him.

## A PSALM AND SONG,

At the dedication of the house of David.

1. I WILL extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. 2. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee: and thou hast healed me. 3. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit. 4. Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. 5. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

It was the laudable practice of the pious Jews, and though not expressly appointed, yet allowed and accepted, when they had built a new house, to dedicate it to God, *Deut.* xx. 5. David did so when his house was built, and he took possession of it, *2 Sam.* v. 11. for royal palaces do as much need God's protection, and are as much bound to be at his service as ordinary houses. Note, The houses we dwell in should at our first entrance upon them be dedicated to God, as little sanctuaries. We must solemnly commit ourselves and our families, and all our family-affairs, to God's conduct and care, must pray for his presence and blessing, must devote ourselves and all ours to his glory, and must resolve both that we will put away iniquity far from our tabernacles, and that we and our houses will serve the Lord, both in the duties of family worship, and in all instances of gospel obedience. Some conjecture that this psalm was sung at the re-dedication of David's house, after he had been driven out of it by Absalom, who had defiled it with his incest, and that it is a thanksgiving for the crushing of that dangerous rebellion.

In these verses,

1. David doth himself give God thanks for the great deliverances he had wrought for him, *ver.* 1. I will extol thee, O Lord, i. e. I will exalt thy name, will praise thee as One high and lifted up: I will do what I can to advance the interests of thy kingdom among men. I will extol thee, for thou hast lifted me up, not only up out of the pit in which I was sinking, but up to the thrones of Israel. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust. In consideration of the great things God has done to exalt us, both by his providence, and by his grace, we are bound in gratitude to do all we can to extol his name, though the most we can do is but little.

Three things magnify David's deliverance:

(1.) That it was the defeat of his enemies: They were not suffered to triumph over him, as they would have done (though it is a barbarous thing) if he had died of this sickness, or perished in this distress; see *Psalm*. xli. 11.

(2.) That it was an answer to his prayers, *ver.* 2. I cried unto thee: All the expressions of the sense we have of our troubles should be directed to God, and every cry be a cry to him, and giving way in this manner to our grief, will ease a burdened spirit. I cried to thee, and thou hast not only heard me but healed me, healed the disordered body, healed the disordered and disquieted mind, healed the disordered, distracted affairs of the kingdom. It is what God gloried in, I am the Lord that healed thee, *Exod.* xv. 26. and we must give him the glory of it.

(3.) That it was the saving of his life; for he was brought to the last extremity, dropping into the grave, and ready to go down into the pit, and yet rescued and kept alive, *ver.* 3. The more imminent our dangers have been, the more eminent our deliverances have been the more comfortable to ourselves, and the more illustrious proofs of the power and goodness of God. A life from the dead ought to be spent in extolling the God of our life.

2. He calls upon others to join with him in praise, not only for the particular favours God had bestowed upon him, but for the general tokens of his good will to all his saints, *ver.* 4. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his. All that are truly saints he owns for his: there is a remnant of such in this world, and from them it is expected that they sing unto him: for they are created and sanctified, made, and made saints, that they be to him for a name and a praise. His saints in heaven sing to him. Why should not those on earth be doing the same work, as well as they can, in consort with them?

1. They believe him to be a God of unspotted purity; and therefore let them sing to him. Let them give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, i. e. let them praise his holy name, for holiness is his memorial throughout all generations. God is a holy God; his holiness is his glory; that is the attribute which the holy angels in their praises fast in most upon, *Isa.* vi. 3. *Rev.* iv. 8. We ought to be much in the mention and remembrance of God's holiness: and holy souls can give thanks at the mention of God's holiness. It is matter of joy to the saints that God is a holy God; for then they hope he will make them holy, more holy. None of all God's perfections carries in it more terror to the wicked, nor more comfort to the godly, than his holiness. It is a good sign we are in some measure partakers of his holiness, if we can heartily rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of it.

2. They have experienced him to be a God gracious and merciful; and therefore let them sing to him.

1. We have found his frowns very short, though we have deserved they should have been everlasting, and that he should have been angry with us till he had consumed us, and should never have been reconciled: yet his anger endureth but for a moment, *ver.* 5. When we offend him, he is angry, but as he is slow to anger, and not soon provoked; so when he is angry, upon our repentance and humiliation, his anger is soon turned away, and he is willing to be at peace with us. If he hide his face from his own children, and suspend the wonted tokens of his favour, it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment; but he will gather them with everlasting kindness, *Isa.* liv. 7, 8. If weeping endure for a night, and it be a wearisome night; yet as sure as the light of the morning returns after the darkness of the night, so sure will joy and comfort return in a short time, in due time to the people of God, for the covenant of grace is as firm as the covenant of the day. This word has often been fulfilled to us in the letter, weeping has endured for a night, but the grief has been soon over, and the grievance gone. Observe, As long as God's anger continues, so long the saints weeping continues, but if that be but for a moment, the affliction is but for a moment, and when the light of God's countenance is restored, the affliction is easily made nothing of.

2. We have found his smiles very sweet: In his favour is life, i. e. all good. The return of his favour to an afflicted soul is a life from the dead; nothing can be more reviving. Our happiness is bound up in God's favour; if we have that we have enough, whatever else we want. It is the life of the soul, it is spiritual life, the earnest of life eternal.

6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. 7. LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. 8. I cried to thee, O LORD: and unto the LORD I made supplication. 9. What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? 10. Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD be thou my helper. 11. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness: 12. To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent: O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

We have in these verses an account of three several states that David was in successively, and of the workings of his heart towards God in each of those states, what he said and did, and how his heart stood affected: in the first of which, we may see what we are too apt to be, and in the other two, what we should be.

1. He had long enjoyed prosperity, and then he grew secure, and over-confident of the continuance of it, *ver.* 6, 7. In my prosperity, when I was in health of body, and God had given me rest from all mine enemies, I said I shall never be moved, i. e. I never thought either of having my body disordered or my government disturbed, nor had any apprehensions of danger upon any account; such complete victories had he obtained over those that opposed him, and such a confirmed interest had he in the hearts of his people, such a firmness of mind, and such a strong constitution of body, that he thought his prosperity fixed like a mountain; yet this he ascribes not to his own wisdom or fortitude, but to the divine goodness. Thou through thy favour hast made my mountain to stand strong, *ver.* 7. He doth not look upon it as his heaven, (as worldly people do, who make their prosperity their felicity) only his mountain, it is earth still, only raised a little higher than the common level; this he thought by the favour of God would be perpetual to him; imagining perhaps, that having had of many troubles in the beginning of his days, he had had his whole share, and should have none in his latter end; or that God who had given him such tokens of his favour, would never frown upon him. Note, (1.) We are very apt to dream when things are well with us, that they will always be so, and never other: To-morrow shall be as this day. As if we should think when the weather is once fair, that it will be ever fair; whereas nothing is more certain than that it will change. (2.) When we see ourselves deceived in our expectations, it becomes us to reflect with shame upon our security as our folly,



folly, as David doth here, that we may be wiser another time, and may rejoice in our prosperity as though we rejoiced not, because the fashion of it passeth away.

2. On a sudden he fell into trouble, and then he prayed to God, and pleaded earnestly for relief and succour. (1.) His mountain was shaken, and he with it; it proved when he grew secure, he was least safe; *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*, in mind, body or estate. In every change of his condition he still kept his eye upon God, and as he ascribed his prosperity to God's favour, so in his adversity he observed the hiding of God's face to be the cause of it. If God hide his face a good man is certainly troubled, though no other calamity befall him; when the sun sets, night certainly follows, and the moon and all the stars cannot make day. (2.) When his mountain was shaken, he lift up his eyes above the hills. Prayer is a salve for every sore; he made use of it accordingly. *Is any afflicted? Is any troubled? Let him pray.* Though God hid his face from him, yet he prayed. If God in wisdom and justice turn from us, yet it will be in us the greatest folly and injustice imaginable, if we turn from him. No, let us learn to pray in the dark, ver. 8. *I cried to thee, O Lord.* It seems God's withdrawals made his prayers the more vehement. We are here told (for it seems he kept account of it) (1.) What he pleaded, ver. 9. That God would be no gainer by his death: *What profit is there in my blood?* implying, that he would willingly die, if he could thereby do any real service to God or his country, *Phil. ii. 17.* but he saw not what good could be done by his dying in the bed of sickness, as might be, if he had died in the bed of honour. Lord, saith he, wilt thou sell one of thine own people for nought, and not increase thy wealth by the price? *Psal. xlii. 12.* Nay, that in his honour, God would seem to be a loser by his death; *Shall the dust praise thee?* The sanctified spirit which returns to God shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the dust which returns to the earth shall not praise him nor declare his truth: The services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. The promises of God's covenant cannot be performed in the dust. Lord, saith David, If I die now, what will become of the promise made to me, who shall declare the truth of that? The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honour, and then we ask aught for life, when we have that in view, that we may live and praise him. (2.) What he prayed for, ver. 10. He prayed for mercy to pardon, *Have mercy upon me*, and for grace to help in time of need. *Lord, be thou my helper.* And on these two errands we also may come boldly to the throne of grace, *Heb. iv. 16.*

3. In due time God delivered him out of his troubles, and restored him to his former prosperity. His prayers were answered, and his mourning was turned into dancing, ver. 11. God's anger now endured but for a moment, and David's weeping but for a night. The sackcloth with which in an humble compliance with the divine providence he had clad himself was loosed, his griefs were balanced, his fears were silenced, his comforts returned, and he was girded with gladness; joy was made his ornament, was made his strength, and seemed to cleave to him, as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man. As David's plunge into trouble from the height of prosperity, and then when he least expected it, teacheth us to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, because we know not how near trouble may be; so his sudden return to a prosperous condition teacheth us to weep as though we wept not, because we know not how soon the storm may become a calm, and the formidable blast may become a favourable gale.

But what temper of mind was he in upon this happy change of the face of his affairs? What doth he say now? He tells us, ver. 12. (1.) His complaints were turned into praises. He looked upon it that therefore God girded him with gladness, to the end that he might be the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. xliii. 1. That his glory might sing praise to God, i. e. his tongue; for our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God: or his soul, for that is our glory above the beasts, that must be employed in blessing the Lord, and with that we must make melody to him in singing psalms. They that are kept from being silent in the pit, must not be silent in the land of the living, but fervent and constant and public in praising God. (2.) These praises were likely to be everlasting. *I will give thanks unto thee for ever.* This speaks a gracious resolution, that he would persevere to the end in praising God, and a gracious hope, that he should never want fresh matter for praise, and that he should shortly be there where this would be the everlasting work. Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him. Thus must we learn to accommodate ourselves to the various providences of God that are concerning us; to want and to abound, to sing of mercy and judgment, and to sing unto God for both.

## P S A L M XXXI.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul; and some passages in it agree particularly to the fair escape he had at Keilah, 1 Sam. xxxiii. 13. and then in the wilderness of Maon, when Saul marched on one side of the hill, and he on the other, and soon after in the cave in the wilderness of Engedi: but that it was penned upon any of those occasions, we are not told. It is a mixture of prayers and praises, and profession of confidence in God, all which do well together, and are helpful to one another. (1.) David professeth his cheerful confidence in God, and in that confidence prays for deliverance out of his present troubles, ver. 1-8. (2.) He complains of the very deplorable condition he was in, and in the sense of his calamities, still prays that God would graciously appear for him against his persecutors, ver. 9-18. (3.) He concludes the psalm with praise and triumph, giving glory to God, and encouraging himself and others to trust in him, ver. 19-24.

¶ To the chief musician. A Psalm of David.

1. **I**N thee, O LORD, do I put my trust, let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. 2. Bow down thine ear to me, deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. 3. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. 4. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. 5. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth. 6. I have hated them that regard lying vanity: but I trust in the LORD. 7. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble: thou hast known my soul in adversities; 8.

And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my foot in a large room.

Faith and prayer must go together. He that believes let him pray; I believe, therefore have I spoken: And he that prays, let him believe, for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here,

1. David in distress is very earnest with God in prayer, for succour and relief. This easeth a burdened spirit, fetcheth in promised mercies, and wonderfully supports and comforts the soul in the expectation of them. He prays, (1.) That God would deliver him, ver. 1. that his life might be preserved from the malice of his enemies, and that an end might be put to their persecutions of him. That God not only in mercy but in righteousness would deliver him, as a righteous judge betwixt him and his unrighteous persecutors. That he would bow down his ear to his petitions, to his appeals, and deliver him, ver. 2. It is condescension in God to take cognizance of the case of the great and best of men; he humbly himself to do it. And that he would deliver him speedily, lest if the deliverance were long deferred his faith should fail. (2.) That if he did not presently deliver him out of his troubles, yet he would protect and shelter him in his troubles. *Be thou my strong rock*, immovable, impregnable, as a fortress framed by nature, and my house of defence, a fortress framed by art, and all to save me. Thus may we pray that God's providence would secure to us our lives and comforts, and that by his grace we may be enabled to think ourselves safe in him, *Prov. xviii. 10.* (3.) That his case having much in it of difficulty, both in respect of duty and in respect of prudence, he might be under a divine conduct; Lord, lead me and guide me, ver. 3. So order my steps, so order my spirit, that I may never do any thing unlawful and unjustifiable against my conscience; or unwise and indiscreet against my interest. They that resolve to follow God's direction, may in faith pray for it. (4.) That his enemies being very crafty, as well as very spiteful; God would frustrate and baffle their designs against him, ver. 4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me*, and keep me from the snare, the trouble, the death, they aim to intrap me in.

2. In this prayer he gives glory to God, by a repeated profession of his confidence in him and dependence on him. This encouraged his prayers, and qualified him for the mercies he prayed for, ver. 1. *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust*, and not in myself, or any sufficiency of my own, or in any creature: *let me never be ashamed*, i. e. let me not be disappointed of any of that good which thou hast promised me, and which therefore I have promised myself in thee.

1. He had chosen God for his protector, and God had by his promise undertaken to be so, ver. 3. *Thou art my rock and my fortress*, by thy covenant with me, and my believing content to that covenant; therefore *be my strong rock*, ver. 2. They that have in sincerity avouched the Lord for theirs, may expect the benefit of his being so, for God's relations to us carry with them both name and thing. *Thou art my strength*, ver. 4. If God be our strength, we may hope that he will both put his strength in us, and put forth his strength for us.

2. He gave up his soul in a special manner to him, ver. 5. *Into thine hands I commit my spirit.* (1.) If David here looks upon himself as a dying man, by these words he resigns his departing soul to God who gave it, and to whom at death the spirit returns. Men can but kill the body, but I trust in God to redeem my soul from the power of the grave, *Psal. xlix. 15.* He is willing to die if God will have it so; but let my soul fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. With these words our Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost upon the cross, and made his soul an offering, a free-will offering for sin, voluntarily laying down his life a ransom. By Stephen's example we are taught in our dying moments to eye Christ at God's right hand, and to commit our spirits to him; *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* But (2.) David is here to be looked upon as a man in distress and trouble. And (1.) His great care is about his soul, his spirit, his better part. Note, Our outward afflictions should increase our concern for our souls. Many think while they are perplexed about their worldly affairs, and providences multiplies their cares about them, they may be excused if they neglect their souls, whereas the greater hazard our lives and secular interests lie at, the more we are concerned to look to our souls, that though the outward man perish, the inward man may suffer no damage, 2 Cor. iv. 16. and that we may keep possession of our souls, when we can keep possession of nothing else, *Luke xxi. 19.* (2.) He thinks the best he can do for his soul, is to commit it into the hand of God, and lodge that great trust with him. He had prayed, ver. 4. to be plucked out of the net of outward trouble, but as not insisting upon that, God's will be done, he presently lets fall that petition, and commits the spirit the inward man into God's hand; Lord, however it goes with me, as to my body, let it go well with my soul. Note, It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us solemnly to commit our spirits into the hands of God, to be sanctified by his grace, devoted to his honour, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom. That which encourageth us to commit our spirits into the hand of God is, that he hath not only created; but redeemed them; the particular redemptions of the Old Testament church and the Old Testament saints, were typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, *Gen. xliiii. 16.* The redemption of the soul is so precious, that it must have ceased for ever, if Christ had not undertaken it, but by redeeming our souls, he has not only acquired an additional right and title to them, which obligeth us to commit them to him as his own, but hath shewed the extraordinary kindness and concern he hath for them, which encourageth us to commit them to him to be preserved to his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim. i. 12. *Thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth; redeemed it*, according to a promise which thou wilt be true to.

3. He disclaimed all confederacy with those that made an arm of flesh their confidence, ver. 6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities*; idolaters, (so some) who expect aid from false gods, which are vanity and a lie. Astrologers, and those that give heed to them, to others: David abhorred the use of enchantments and divinations, consulted not nor ever took notice of the flight of birds or entrails of beasts, good omens or bad omens, they are lying vanities, and he not only did not regard them himself, but hated the wickedness of those that did, he trusted in God only, and got in any creature; his interest in the court or country, his retreats or strong holds, even Goliath's sword itself, those were lying vanities, which he could not depend upon, but trusted in the Lord only. See *Psalms xl. 4. Jer. xvii. 5.*

4. He comforted himself with his hope in God, and made himself not only easy, but cheerful with it, ver. 7. Having relied on God's mercy, he will be glad and rejoice in it; and those know not how to value their hope in God, who cannot find joy enough in that hope to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs.

5. He encouraged himself in this hope, with the experiences he had had of late and formerly of God's goodness to him, which he mentions to the glory of God; he that has delivered doth and will. (1.) God had taken notice of his afflictions, and all the circumstances of them. *Thou hast considered my trouble*, with wisdom to suit relief to it, with condescension



and compassion regarded the low estate of thy servant. (2.) He had observed the temper of his spirit and the workings of his heart under his afflictions; *Thou hast known my soul in afflictions*, with a tender concern and care for it. God's eye is upon our souls when we are in trouble, to see whether they be humbled for sin, submissive to the will of God, and benefited by the affliction. If the soul, when cast down under affliction, has been lifted up to him in true devotion, he knows it. (3.) He had rescued him out of the hands of Saul, when he had him safe enough in Keilah, 1 Sam. xxiii. 7. *Thou hast not put me up in the hands of the enemy*, but set me at liberty in a large room, where I may shift for my own safety. ver. 8. Christ's using these words, ver. 5. upon the cross, may warrant us to apply all this to Christ, who trusted in his Father, and was supported and delivered by him; (and because he humbled himself) highly exalted, which it is proper to think of when we sing these verses, as also therein to acknowledge the experience we have had of God's gracious presence with us in our troubles, and to encourage ourselves to trust in him for the future.

9. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble; mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly. 10. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. 11. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without, fled from me. 12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. 13. For I have heard the slander of many, fear was on every side, while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. 14. But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. 15. My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. 16. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies sake. 17. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. 18. Let the lying lips be put to silence: which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

In the foregoing verses David had appealed to God's righteousness, and pleaded his relation to him, and dependence on him; here he appeals to his mercy, and pleads the greatness of his misery, which made his case the proper object of that mercy. Observe,

1. The complaint he makes of his trouble and distress, ver. 9. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble*, and need thy mercy: the remembrance he makes of his condition is not much unlike some even of Job's complaints.

1. His troubles had fixed a very deep impression upon his mind, and made him a man of sorrows. So great was his grief that his very soul was consumed with it, and his life spent with it, and he was continually sighing, ver. 9, 10. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was intimately acquainted with grief, and often in tears. We may guess by David's complexion, which was ruddy and sanguine, by his genius for music, and by his daring enterprizes in his early days, that his natural temper was both cheerful and stout, that he was apt enough to be merry, and not at all to lay trouble to his heart, and yet here we see what he is brought to: He has almost wept out his eyes, and sighed away his breath. Let those that are airy and gay take heed of running into extremes, and never set sorrow at defiance; God can find out ways to make them melancholy, if they will not otherwise learn to be serious.

2. His body was affected with the sorrows of his mind, ver. 10. *My strength fails, my bones are consumed*, and all because of mine iniquity. As to Saul, and the quarrel he had with him, he could confidently insist upon his righteousness; but as it was an affliction God laid upon him, he owns he had deserved it, and freely confesseth his iniquity to have been the procuring cause of all his trouble: and the sense of sin touched him to the quick, and wasted him more than all his calamities.

3. His friends were unkind, and became shy of him, he was a fear to his acquaintance, when they saw him they fled from him, ver. 11. They durst not harbour him, nor give him any assistance, nor shew him any countenance; not so much as be seen in his company, for fear of being brought into trouble by it, now Saul had proclaimed him a traitor and outlawed him. They saw how dear Abimelech the priest had paid for aiding and abetting him, though ignorantly; and therefore, though they could not but own he had a great deal of wrong done him, yet they had not the courage to appear for him. He was forgotten by them, as a dead man out of mind, ver. 12. and looked upon with contempt as a broken vessel. They that shewed him all possible respects, when he was in honour at court, now he was fallen into disgrace, though unjustly, were strange to him. Such swallow-friends the world is full of, that are gone in winter. Let those that fall on the losing side, not think it strange if they be thus deserted, but make sure a friend in heaven that will not fail them, and make use of him.

4. His enemies were unjust in their censures of him: they would not have persecuted him as they did, if they had not first represented him as an ill man; he was a reproach among all his enemies, but especially among his neighbours, ver. 11. Those that had been the witnesses of his integrity, and could not but be convinced in their consciences that he was an honest man, yet were the most forward to represent him quite otherwise, that they might curry favour with Saul. Thus he heard the slander of many, every one had a stone to throw at him, because fear was on every side, i. e. they durst not do otherwise, for he that would not join with his neighbours to abuse David, was looked upon as disaffected to Saul. Thus the best of men have been put under the worst characters by those that resolved to give them the worst treatment.

5. His life was aimed at, and he went in continual peril of it. That fear was on every side, and he knew that whatever counsel his enemies took against him, the design was not to take away his liberty, but to take away his life, ver. 13. A life so valuable, so useful, to the good services of which all Israel owed so much, and which was never forfeited: Thus in all the plots of the Pharisees and Herodians against Christ, still the design was to take away his life: such is the enmity and cruelty of the serpent's seed.

2. His confidence in God in the midst of these troubles; every thing

looked black and dismal round about him, and threatened to drive him to despair. But I trusted in thee, O Lord, ver. 14. and that kept me from sinking. His enemies robbed him of his reputation among men, but they could not rob him of his comfort in God, because they could not drive him from his confidence in God. Two things he comforted himself with in his straits, and he went to God, and pleaded them with him. (1.) *Thou art my God, i. e.* I have chosen thee for mine, and thou hast promised to be mine; and if he be ours, and we can by faith call him so, it is enough, when we can call nothing else ours. Thou art my God, and therefore to whom shall I go for relief but to thee? They need not be frightened in their prayers who can plead this, for if God undertake to be our God, he will do that for us, which will answer the compass and vast extent of that engagement. (2.) *My times are in thy hand*, Join this with the former, and it makes the comfort complete. If God have our times in his hand, he can help us, and if he be our God he will help us, and then what can discourage us? It is a great support to those who have God for their God, that their times are in his hand, and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best to all those who commit their spirits also into his hand, to suit them to their times, as David here, ver. 5. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, imbitter or sweeten, as he pleaseth, according to the counsel of his will. Our times, i. e. all events that are concerning us, and the timing of them, these are at God's dispose; they are not in our own hands; for the way of man is not in himself, not in our friends hands, nor in our enemies hands, but in God's, *every man's judgment proceedeth from him*. David doth not in his prayers prescribe to God, but subscribe to him, Lord, my times are in thy hand, and I am well pleased that they are so, they could not be in a better hand; thy will be done.

3. His petitions to God: In this faith and confidence,

1. He prays that God would deliver him out of the hand of his enemies, ver. 15. and save him, ver. 16. and this for his mercies sake, and not for any merit of his own. Our opportunities are in God's hand, (so some read it) and, therefore he knows how to choose the best and fittest time for our deliverance, and we must be willing to wait that time. When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, *This is the time in which God will deliver thee*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4. No, saith David, the time is not come for my deliverance, till it can be wrought without sin, and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time.

2. That God would give him the comfort of his favour in the mean time, ver. 16. *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*. Let me have the comfortable tokens and evidences of thy favour to me, and that shall put gladness in my heart in the midst of all my griefs.

3. That his prayers to God might be answered, and his hopes in God accomplished, ver. 17. *Let me not be ashamed of my hopes and prayers, for I have called upon thee*, who never saidst to thy people, seek in vain, and hope in vain.

4. That shame and silence might be the portion of wicked people, and particularly of his enemies. They were confident of their success against David, and that they should run him down, and ruin him. Lord, saith he, let them be made ashamed of that confidence by the disappointment of their expectations. As those that opposed the building of the wall about Jerusalem, when it were finished, were much cast down in their own eyes, Neh. vi. 16. *Let them be silent in the grave*. Note, Dath will silence the rage and clamour of cruel persecutors, whom reason would not silence. In the grave the wicked cease from troubling. Particularly, he prays for, that is he prophesies, the silencing of those that reproach and calumniate the people of God, ver. 18. *Let lying lips be put to silence, that speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous*. This is a very good prayer, 1. Which we have often occasion to put up to God; for they that set their mouth against the heavens, commonly fall foul on the heirs of heaven. Religion and the strict and serious professors of it, are every where spoken against. 1. With a great deal of malice; they speak grievous things, on purpose to vex them, and hoping with what they say to do them a real mischief. They speak hard things, (so the word is) which bear hard upon them, and by which they hope to fasten indelible characters of infamy upon them. 2. With a great deal of falsehood, they are lying lips taught by the father of lies, and serving his interest. 3. With a great deal of scorn and disdain: They speak proudly and contemptuously, as if the righteous, whom God has honoured, were the most despicable people in the world, and not worthy to set with the dogs of their flock. One would think they thought it no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it may but serve to expose a good man either to hatred or contempt. *Hear, O our God, for we are despised*. (2.) We may pray it in faith; for these lying lips shall be put to silence. God has many ways of doing it. Sometimes he convinceth the consciences of those that reproach his people, and turns their hearts; sometimes by his providence he visibly confutes their calumnies, and brings forth the righteousness of his people as the light. However, there is a day coming, when God will convince ungodly sinners of the falsehood of all the hard speeches they have spoken against his people, and will execute judgment upon them, Judg. xiv. 15. Then shall this prayer be fully answered, and to that day we should have an eye in the singing of it; engaging ourselves likewise by well doing, if possible, to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. ii. 15.

19. Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men? 20. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. 21. Blessed be the LORD; for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city. 22. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee. 23. O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. 24. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

We have three things in these verses:

1. The believing acknowledgment which David makes of God's goodness to his people in general, ver. 19, 20.

(1.) God is good in all, but he is in a special manner good to Israel. His goodness to them is wonderful, and will be to eternity matter of admiration. *O how great is thy goodness?* how profound are the counsels of it; how rich are the treasures of it; how free and extensive are the communications of it! Those very persons whom men load with slanders, God loads with



with benefits and honours. Those who are interested in this goodness are described to be such as fear God, and trust in him, that stand in awe of his greatness, and rely on his grace. This goodness is said to be laid up for them, and wrought for them. 1. There is goodness laid up for them in the other world, an inheritance reserved in heaven. 1 Pet. i. 4. and there is goodness wrought for them in this world, goodness wrought in them. There is enough in God's goodness both for the portion and inheritance of all his children, when they come to their full age: and for their maintenance and education during their minority. There is enough in bank, and enough in hand. 2. This goodness is laid up in his promise for all that fear God, to whom assurance is given that they shall want no good thing; But it is wrought in the actual performance of the promise, for those that trust in him, i. e. that by faith take hold of the promise, put it in fruit, and draw out to themselves the benefit and comfort of it. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of the everlasting covenant be not wrought for us, it is our own fault, because we do not believe. But those that trust in God, as they have the comfort of his goodness in their own bosoms; so they have the credit of it (and the credit of an estate goes far with some) it is wrought for them before the sons of men: God's goodness to them puts an honour upon them and rolls away their reproach; for all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed, Isa. lxi. 9.

(2.) God preserveth man and beast; but he is in a special manner the protector of his own people, ver. 20. *Thou shalt hide them.* As his goodness is hid and reserved for them, so they are hid and preserved for it. The saints are God's hidden ones. See here, 1. The danger they are in, which ariseth from the pride of man, and from the strife of tongues; proud men insult over them, and would trample on them, and tread them down; contentious men pick quarrels with them, and when tongues are at strife, good people oftentimes go by the worst. The pride of men endangers their liberty: the strife of tongues in perverse disputings endangers truth. But, 2. See the defence they are under: *Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence; in a pavilion.* God's providence shall keep them safe from the malice of their enemies: He has many ways of sheltering them; when Baruch and Jeremiah were sought for, *The Lord hid them*, Jer. xxxvi. 26. God's grace shall keep them safe from the evil of the judgments that are abroad; to them they have no sting; they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, for there is no anger at them. His comforts shall keep them easy and cheerful, and his sanctuary, where they have communion with him, shelters them from the fiery darts of terror and temptation. And the mansions in his house above, shall be shortly, shall be eternally, their hiding-place from all danger and fear.

2. The thankful returns which David makes for God's goodness to him in particular, ver. 21, 22. Having admired God's goodness to all the saints, he here owns how good he had found him.

(1.) Without were fightings; but God had wonderfully preserved his life. *He hath shewed me his marvellous loving kindness, i. e.* He hath given me an instance of his care of me, and favour to me, beyond what I could have expected. God's loving kindness to his people, all things considered, is wonderful; but some instances of it, even in this world, are in a special manner marvellous in their eyes; as this here, when God preserved David from the sword of Saul in caves and woods, as safe as if he had been in a strong city. In Keilah that strong city, God shewed him great mercy, both in making him an instrument to rescue the inhabitants out of the hands of the Philistines, and then in rescuing him from the same men, who would ungratefully have delivered him up into the hand of Saul. 1 Sam. xxiii. 5; 12. This was marvellous loving kindness indeed, upon which he writes with wonder and thankfulness, *blessed be the Lord.* Special preservations call for particular thanksgivings.

(2.) Within were fears: but God was better to him than his fears, ver. 22. He here keeps an account; (1.) Of his own folly in distrusting God, which he acknowledged to his shame, that though he had express promises to build upon, and great experience of God's care concerning him in many straits; yet he had entertained this hard and jealous thought of God, and could not forbear telling it him to his face. *I am cut off from before thine eyes, i. e.* Thou hast quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul,* and so be cut off before thine eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on, 1 Sam. xxii. 1. This he said in his flight (so some read it) which notes the distress of his affairs. Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong; *In his haste* (so we read it) which notes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, It is a common thing to speak amiss, when we speak in haste, and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste, we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God.

(2.) Of God's wonderful goodness to him notwithstanding; though his faith failed, God's promise did not, *Thou heardest the voice of my supplication* for all this. He mentions his own unbelief as a foil to God's fidelity, serving to make his loving kindness the more marvellous, the more illustrious. When we have thus distrusted God, he might justly have taken us at our word, and brought our fears upon us, as he did upon Israel, Num. xiv. 23. Isa. lxi. 4. But he has pitied and pardoned us, and our unbelief has not made his promise and grace of none effect; for he knows our frame.

3. The exhortation and encouragement, which he hereupon gives to all the saints, ver. 23, 24.

1. He would have them set their love on God, ver. 23. *O love the Lord, all ye his saints.* Those that have their own hearts full of love to God, cannot but desire that others also may be in love with him: for in his favour there is no need to fear a rival. It is the character of the saints, that they do love God; and yet they must be still called upon to love him, to love him more, and love him better; and give proofs of their love. We must love him not only for his goodness, because he preserveth the faithful, but for his justice; because he plentifully rewardeth the proud doer (who would ruin those whom he preserves) according to their pride. Some take it in a good sense, he plentifully rewardeth the magnificent (or excellent) doer, that is, daringly good, whose heart, like Jehoshaphat's, is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He rewardeth him that doeth well, but plentifully rewardeth him that doeth excellently well.

2. He would have them set their hope in God, ver. 24. Be of good courage, have a good heart on it, whatever difficulties or dangers you may meet with, the God you trust in shall by that trust strengthen your heart. They that hope in God have reason to be of good courage, and let their hearts be strong, for as nothing truly evil can befall them, so nothing truly good for them shall be wanting to them.

In singing this we should animate ourselves and one another, to proceed and persevere in our christian course, whatever threatens us, and whoever frowns upon us.

*This psalm, though it speak not of Christ, as many of the psalms hitherto we have met with have done, yet it has a great deal of gospel in it. The apostle tells us, that David in this psalm describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Rom. vi. 6. We have here a summary, (1.) Of gospel grace in the pardon of sin, ver. 1, 2. In divine protection, ver. 7. and divine conduct, ver. 8. (2.) Of gospel duty; To confess sin, ver. 3—5. To pray, ver. 6. To govern ourselves well, ver. 9, 10. And to rejoice in God, ver. 11. And the way to obtain these privileges is to make conscience of those duties, which we ought to think of; of the former for our comfort, of the latter for our quickening, when we sing this psalm. Grotius thinks it was designed to be sung on the day of atonement.*

¶ A PSALM OF DAVID, MASCHIL.

1. **BLESSED** is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. 3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roaring all the day long. 4. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. 5. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. 6. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him.

This psalm is intitled, Maschil, which some take to be only the name of the tune to which it was set, and was to be sung. But others think it is significant; our margin reads it, *A psalm of David giving instruction*; and there is nothing in which we have more need of instruction than in the nature of true blessedness, wherein it consists, and the way that leads to it, what we must do that we may be happy. There are divers things in which these verses instruct us. In general we are here taught, that our happiness consists in the favour and grace of God, and not in the wealth of this world; in spiritual blessings, and not the good things of this world; when David saith, *Psal. i. 1. Blessed is the man that walks not in the council of the ungodly,* and *Psal. cxix. 1. Blessed are the undefiled in the way,* the meaning is, this is the character of the blessed man, and he that has not this character cannot expect to be happy; but when it is here said, *Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven,* the meaning is, This is the ground of his blessedness, this is that fundamental privilege from which all the other ingredients of his blessedness flow.

In particular we are here instructed,

1. Concerning the nature of the pardon of sin; this is that we all need, and are undone without, and we are therefore concerned to be very solicitous and inquisitive about it. (1.) It is the forgiving of transgression. *Sin is the transgression of the law*; upon our repentance the transgression is forgiven, i. e. the obligation to punishment, which we lay under by virtue of the sentence of the law, is vacated and cancelled; it is lifted off (so some read it) that by the pardon of it we may be eased of a burden, a heavy burden like a load on the back, that makes us stoop, or a load on the stomach, that makes us sick, or a load on the spirits that makes us sink: The remission of sins gives rest and relief to those that were weary and heavy laden, Matt. xi. 28. (2.) It is the covering of sin, as nakedness is covered, that it may not appear to our shame, Rev. iii. 18. One of the first symptoms of guilt in our first parents, was blushing at their own nakedness; sin makes us loathsome in the sight of God, and utterly unfit for communion with him, and when conscience is awakened, it makes us loathsome to ourselves too; but when it is pardoned, it is covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, like the coats of skins wherewith God clothed Adam and Eve, (an emblem of the remission of sins) so that God is no longer displeased with us, but perfectly reconciled. They are not covered from us; no, *my sin is ever before me*, nor covered from God's omniscience, but from his vindictive justice; when he pardons sin, he remembers it no more, he casts it behind his back, it shall be sought for and not found. And the sinner being thus reconciled to God, begins to be reconciled to himself. (3.) It is the not imputing of iniquity, not laying it to the sinners charge, not proceeding against him for it, according to the strictness of the law, not dealing with him, as he deserves. The righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, and we made the righteousness of God in him, our iniquity is not imputed, God having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and made him sin for us. Observe, It is God's act not to impute iniquity, for he is the judge, *It is God that justifieth.*

2. Concerning the character of those whose sins are pardoned, *in whose spirit there is no guile*, he doth not say there is no guilt, for who is there that lives and sins not? but no guile, that doth not dissemble with God in his professions of repentance and faith, and in his prayers for peace or pardon; but in all these is sincere, and means as he saith; that doth not repent with a purpose to sin again, and then sin with a purpose to repent again, as a learned interpreter glossed upon it. Those that design honestly, that are really what they profess to be, those are the Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

3. Concerning the happiness of a justified state; blessedness is to the man whose iniquity is forgiven, all manner of blessings sufficient to make him completely blessed. That is taken away which incurred the curse and obstructed the blessing, and then God will pour out blessings till there be no room to receive them. The forgiveness of sin is that article of the covenant, which is the reason and ground of all the rest, *for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, Heb. viii. 12.

4. Concerning the uncomfortable condition of an humbled sinner, that sees his guilt, but is not yet brought to make a penitent confession of it. This David describes very pathetically from his own sad experience, ver. 3, 4. *While I kept silence my bones waxed old.* Those may be said to keep silence that stifle their convictions, that when they cannot but see the evil of sin, and their danger by reason of it, ease themselves by not thinking of it, and diverting their minds to something else; as Cain to the building of a city; that cry not when God binds them; that will not unburthen their consciences by a penitent confession, nor seek for peace as they ought, by faithful and fervent prayer; and that chose rather to pine away in their



iniquities, than to take the method which God has appointed of finding rest for their souls; let such expect that their smothered convictions will be a fire in their bones, and the wounds of sin not opened will fester, and grow intolerably painful. If conscience be feared, the case is so much the more dangerous, but if it be startled and awake, it will be heard: The hand of divine wrath will be felt lying heavy upon the soul, and the anguish of the spirit will affect the body; to that degree David experienced it, so that when he was young his bones waxed old; and even his silence made him roar all the day long, as if he had been under some grievous pain and distemper of body; when really the cause of all his uneasiness was the struggle he felt in his own bosom between his convictions and his corruptions.

Note, *He that covers his sin shall not prosper*, some inward trouble is required in repentance, but there is much worse in impenitency.

5. Concerning the true and only way to peace of conscience: We are here taught to confess our sins that they may be forgiven, to declare them, that we may be justified. This course David took, *I acknowledge my sin unto thee*, and no longer *hide mine iniquity*, ver. 5. Note, Those that would have the comfort of the pardon of their sins, must take shame to themselves by a penitent confession of them. We must confess the fact of sin, and be particular in it; *Thus and thus, have I done*; confess the fault of sin, aggravate it, and lay load upon ourselves for it, *I have done very wickedly*; confess the justice of the punishment we have been under for it, *The Lord is just in all that is brought upon us*; and that we deserve much worse, *I am no more worthy to be called thy son*. We must confess sin with shame and holy blushing, with fear and holy trembling.

6. Concerning God's readiness to pardon sin to those who truly repent of it. *I said I will confess*, i. e. I sincerely resolved upon it, hesitated no longer but came to a point, that I would make a free and ingenuous confession of my sins, and immediately *thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*, and gavest me the comfort of thy pardon in mine own conscience; presently I found rest to my soul. Note, God is more ready to pardon sin upon our repentance, than we are to repent, in order to the obtaining of pardon. It was with much ado that David was here brought to confess his sins, he was put to the rack before he was brought to it, ver. 3, 4. he held out long, and would not surrender till it came to the last extremity; but when he did offer to surrender, see how quickly, how easily he obtained good terms: I did but say I will confess, and thou forgavest. Thus the father of the prodigal saw his returning son when he was yet afar off, and ran to meet him with the kiss that sealed his pardon. What an encouragement is this to poor penitents? and what an assurance doth it give us, that if we confess our sins, we shall find God not only faithful and just, but gracious and kind to forgive us our sins.

7. Concerning the good use that we are to make of the experience David had had of God's readiness to forgive his sins, ver. 6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee*. Note, (1.) All godly people are praying people. As soon as ever Paul was converted, *Behold, he prays*, Act. ix. 40. You may as soon find a living man without breath, as a living Christian without prayer. (2.) The instructions given us concerning the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and the easiness of obtaining the pardon, should engage and encourage us to pray, and particularly to pray. *God be merciful to us sinners*: For this shall every one that is well inclined be earnest with God in prayer, and come boldly to the throne of grace, with hopes to obtain mercy, Heb. iv. 16. (3.) Those that would speed in prayer, must seek the Lord in a time when he will be found: When he doth by his providence call them to seek him, and by his spirit stir them up to seek him, they must go speedily to seek the Lord, Zech. viii. 21. and lose no time. If death cut them off, and then it will be too late to seek him, Isa. lv. 6. *Behold now is the accepted time*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. (4.) Those that are sincere and abundant in prayer, will find the benefit of it, when they are in trouble. *Surely in the floods of great waters*, which are very threatening, *they shall not come nigh them*, to terrify them, or create them any uneasiness; much less shall they overwhelm them. Those that have God nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for, as all upright, penitent, praying people have, are so guarded, so advanced, that no waters, no not great waters, no not floods of them, can come nigh them to hurt them. As the temptations of the wicked one touch them not, 1 John v. 18. so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts of both kinds drop short of them.

7. Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. 8. I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide me with mine eye. 9. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. 10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. 11. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice ye righteous: and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart.

David is here improving the experience he had had of the comfort of pardoning mercy.

(1.) He speaks to God, and professeth his confidence in him, and expectation from him, ver. 7. having tasted the sweetness of divine grace to a penitent sinner, he cannot doubt of the continuance of that grace to a praying saint; and that in that grace he should find both safety and joy. (1.) Safety; *Thou art my hiding-place*, when by faith I have recourse to thee, I see all the reason in the world to be easy, and to think myself out of the reach of any real evil. *Thou shalt preserve me from trouble*, from the sting of it, and from the strokes of it, as far as is good for me. *Thou shalt preserve me from such trouble as I was in while I kept silence*, ver. 3. when God has pardoned our sins, if he leave us to ourselves, we shall soon run as far in debt again as ever, and plunge ourselves again into the same gulf; and therefore when we have received the comfort of our remission, we must fly to the grace of God to be preserved from returning to folly again, and having our hearts again hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; God keeps the people from trouble, by keeping them from sin. (2.) Joy; thou shalt not only deliver me, but *compass me about with songs of deliverance*, which way soever I look I shall see occasion to rejoice and to praise God, and my friends also shall compass me about in the great congregation, to join with me in songs of praise: They shall join their songs of deliverance with mine; as *every one that is godly shall pray with me*, so they shall give thanks with me.

(2.) He turns his speech to the children of men; being himself converted, he doth what he can to strengthen his brethren, Luke xii. 32. ver. 8. *I will instruct thee*, whoever thou art that desirest instruction, and *teach thee in the way which thou shalt go*. Thus in another of his penitential psalms he re-

solves that when God had restored to him the joy of his salvation, he would teach transgressors his works, and do what he could to convert sinners to God, as well as to comfort those that were converted; Psalm li. 12, 13. when Solomon became a penitent, he presently became a preacher, Eccles. i. 1. Those are best able to teach others the grace of God, who have themselves had the experience of it: And those who are themselves taught of God, ought to tell others what he had done for their souls, Psalm lxxvi. 16. and so teach them. *I will guide thee with mine eye*. Some apply it to God's conduct and direction: he teacheth us by his word, and guides us with his eye, i. e. by the secret intimations of his will in the hints and turns of providence, which he enables his people to understand and take direction from; as a master makes a servant know his mind by a wink of his eye: When Christ turned and looked upon Peter, he guided him with his eye. But it is rather to be taken as David's promise to those who sat under his instruction, his own children and family especially. *I will counsel thee, mine eye shall be upon thee*, so the margin reads it; I will give thee the best counsel, I can, and then observe whether thou takest it no. Those that are taught in the word should be under the constant inspection of those that teach them; spiritual guides must be overseers.

In this application of the foregoing doctrine concerning the blessedness of those whose sins are pardoned, here is a word to sinners, and a word to saints; and this is rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each their portion.

(1.) Here is a word of caution to sinners, and a good reason given for it.

(1.) The caution is not to be unruly and ungovernable, ver. 9. *Be ye not as the horse or the mule which have no understanding*. When the psalmist would reproach himself for the sins he repenteth of he compared himself to a beast before God, so foolish have I been and ignorant, Psalm lxxiii. 23. and therefore warns others not to be so. It is our honour and happiness that we have understanding, that we are capable of being governed by reason, and of reasoning with ourselves: Let us therefore use the faculties we have, and act rationally. The horse and mule must be managed with bit and bridle, lest they come near us to do us a mischief, or, (as some read it) that they may come near to do us a service, that they may obey us, Jam. iii. 3. Let us not be like them, i. e. let us not be hurried by appetite and passion at any time, to go contrary to the dictates of right reason, and to our true interest; if sinners would be governed and determined by these, they would soon become saints, and would not go a step further in their sinful courses; where there is renewing grace, there is no need of the bit and bridle of restraining grace. (2.) The reason for this caution is, because the way of sin which we would persuade you to forsake, will certainly end in sorrow, ver. 10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked*, which will not only spoil their vain and carnal mirth, and put an end to it, but will make them pay dear for it. sin will have sorrow if not repented of, everlasting sorrow. It was part of the sentence, *I will greatly multiply thy sorrows*. Be wise for yourselves therefore, and turn from your wickedness, that you may prevent those sorrows, those many sorrows.

(2.) Here is a word of comfort to saints, and a good reason given for that too. (1.) They are assured that if they will but trust in the Lord, and keep close to him, *mercy shall compass them about on every side*, ver. 10. so that they shall not depart from God, for that mercy shall keep them in, nor shall any real evil break in upon them, for that mercy shall keep it out. (2.) They are therefore commanded to be glad in the Lord, and to rejoice in him, to that degree, as even to *shout for joy*, ver. 11. Let them be so transported with this holy joy, as not to be able to contain themselves, and let them affect others with it, that they also may see that a life of communion with God, is the most pleasant and comfortable life we can live in this world. This is that pleasant bliss which the upright in heart, and they only, are entitled to and qualified for.

## P S A L M XXXIII.

This is a psalm of praise, it is probably David was the penman of it, but we are not told so, because God would have us look above the penman of sacred writ, to that blessed Spirit that moved and guided them. The psalmist in this psalm. (1.) Calls upon the righteous to praise God, ver. 1-3. (2.) Furnisheth us with matter for praise. We must praise God, (1.) For his justice, goodness, and truth, appearing in his word, and in all his works, ver. 4, 5. (2.) For his power appearing in the work of creation, ver. 6, 9. (3.) For the sovereignty of his providence in the government of the world, ver. 10, 11. and again, ver. 13-17. (4.) For the peculiar favour which he bears to his own chosen people, which encourageth them to trust in him, ver. 13. and again, ver. 18-22. We need not be far to seek for proper thoughts in singing this psalm, which so naturally speaks the pious affections of a devout soul towards God.

1. REJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright. 2. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltry, and an instrument of ten strings. 3. Sing unto him a new song, play skilfully with a loud noise. 4. For the word of the LORD is right: and all his works are done in truth. 5. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. 6. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made: and all the host of them, by the breath of his mouth. 7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together, as an heap: he layeth up the depth in store-houses. 8. Let all the earth fear the LORD: Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. 10. The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. 11. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Four things the psalmist expresseth in these verses.

(1.) The great desire he had that God might be praised; he did not think he did it so well himself, but that he wished others also might be employed in this work, the more the better in this concert, it is the liker to heaven.

(1.) Holy joy, is the heart and soul of praise, and that is here pressed upon all good people, ver. 1. *Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous*, so the foregoing psalm concluded, and so this begins; for all our religious exercises should both begin and end with a holy complacency and triumph in God as the best



best of beings and best of friends: (2.) Thankful praise is the breath and language of holy joy; and that also is here required of us, *ver. 2. Praise the Lord.* Speak well of him, and give him the glory due to his name. (3.) Religious songs are the proper expressions of thankful praise; those are here required, *ver. 3. Sing unto him a new song*, the best you have, not that which by frequent use is worn threadbare; but that which being new is most likely to move the affections. A new song for new mercies, and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are new every morning. Music was then used by the appointment of David, with the temple songs, that they might be the better song; and this also is here called for, *ver. 2. Sing unto him with the psalter.* Here is, (1.) A good rule for this duty, do it skilfully, and with a loud noise; let it have the best both of head and heart; let it be done intelligently, and with a clear head; affectionately, and with a warm heart. (2.) A good reason for this duty, for *praise is comely for the upright.* It is greatly well-pleasing to God; the garments of praise add much to the comeliness which God puts upon his people; and it is an excellent ornament to our profession; *It becomes the upright*, whom God has put so much honour upon, to give honour to him. The upright praise God in a comely manner, for they praise him with their hearts, that is praising him with their glory. Whereas the praises of hypocrites are awkward and uncomely, like *a parable in the mouth of fools*, *Prov. xxvi. 7.*

2. The high thoughts he had of God, and of his infinite perfections, *ver. 4, 5.* God makes himself known to us. (1.) In his word; here put for all divine revelation, all that which God at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the children of men; and that is all right, there is nothing amiss in it: his commands exactly agree with the rules of equity and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises are all wise and good, and inviolably sure, and there is no iniquity in his threatenings, but even those are designed for our good, by deterring us from evil. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong, and we are then in the right when we agree with it. (2.) In his works; and those are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the *scriptures of truth*, *Dan. x. 21.* The copy in all God's works agrees exactly with the great original, the plan laid in the eternal mind, and varies not in the least jot. God has made it to appear in his works, (1.) That he is a God of inflexible justice. He loveth righteousness and judgment. There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence he passeth, and judgment in the execution of it. He never did or can do wrong to any of his creatures, but is always ready to right those that are wronged, and doth it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is himself the righteous Lord; and therefore loveth righteousness. (2.) That he is a God of inexhaustible bounty; *the earth is full of his goodness*, i. e. of the proofs and instances of it. The benign influences which the earth receives from above, and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce; the provision that is made both for man and beast, and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed, plainly speak that *the earth is full of his goodness*; the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted. What pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of his praises; and that of the multitudes that live upon his bounty, there are so few that live to his glory.

(3.) The conviction he was under of the almighty power of God, evidenced in the creation of the world. We believe in God, and therefore we praise him as the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, so we are here taught to praise him.

Observe, (1.) How God made the world, and brought all things into being. (1.) How easily: All things were made *by the word of the Lord, and by the breath of his mouth*; Christ is the word, the Spirit is the breath, so that God the Father made the world, as he rules it, and redeems it by his Son and Spirit. He spake, and he commanded, *ver. 9.* and that was enough, there needed no more: With men, saying and doing are two things, but it is not so with God; by the Word and Spirit of God as the world was made, so was man, that little world: God said, Let us make man, and he breathed into him the breath of life. By the Word and Spirit the church is built, that new world and grace wrought in the soul, that new man, that new creation. What cannot that power do, which with a word made a world! (2.) How effectually it was done, and it stood fast. What God doth, he doth to purpose; he doth it and it stands fast, *ver. 9. Whatsoever God doth it shall be for ever*, *Eccles. iii. 14.* It is by virtue of that command to stand fast, that they continue to this day according to God's ordinance, *1 Sam. ix. 21.*

(2.) What he made: He made all things, but notice is here taken, (1.) Of the heavens, and the host of them, *ver. 6.* The visible heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars, their hosts; the highest heavens, and the angels their hosts. (2.) Of the waters and the treasures of them, *ver. 7.* The earth was at first covered with the water, and being heavier, must of course subside and sink under it: but to shew from the very first, that the God of nature is not tied to the ordinary method of nature, and the usual operations of his powers; with a word's speaking, he gathered the waters together on a heap, that the dry land might appear, yet left them not to continue on a heap, but laid up the depth in store houses; not only in the flat where the seas make their beds, and in which they are locked up by the sand on the shore as in store houses; but in secret subterraneous caverns, where they are hid from the eyes of all living, but were reserved as in a store-house for that day, when those fountains of the great deep were to be broken up; and they are still laid up there in store, for what use the great Master of the house knows best.

(3.) What use is to be made of this, *ver. 8. Let all the earth fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him*, i. e. let all the children of men worship him, and give glory to him, *Psalm xcv. 5, 6.* The everlasting gospel gives this as the reason why we must worship God, because he made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, *Rev. xiv. 6, 7.* Let us all fear him; i. e. dread his wrath and displeasure, and be afraid of having him our enemy, and standing it out against him. Let us not dare to offend him, who having this power, no doubt, has all power in his hand. It is dangerous being at war with him, who has the host of heaven for his armies, and the depths of the sea for his magazines, and therefore it is wisdom to desire conditions of peace, see *Jer. v. 22.*

4. The satisfaction he had in God's sovereignty and dominion, *ver. 10, 11.* He over-rules all the counsels of men, and makes them contrary to their intention serviceable to his counsels. Come and see with an eye of faith God in the throne, (1.) Frustrating the devices of his enemies. He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, so that what they imagine against him and his kingdom proves a vain thing, *Psalm ii. 1.* the counsel of Ahiohophel is turned into foolishness, Haman's plot baffled: though the design he laid never to deep, and the hopes raised upon it never so high; yet if God said it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass; it is all to no purpose. (2.) Fulfilling his own decrees: The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever. It is immutable in itself, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? The execution of it may be opposed but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most

surprising, the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled, nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its times. With what pleasure to our lives may we in singing this give praise to God? How easy may this thought make us at all times, that God governs the world, that he did it in infinite wisdom before we were born; and will do it when we are silent in the dust?

12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. 13. The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works. 16. There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. 18. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him: upon them that hope in his mercy: 19. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20. Our soul waiteth for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. 21. For our hearts shall rejoice in him; because we have trusted in his holy name. 22. Let thy mercy, O LORD be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

We are here taught to give to God the glory,

(1.) Of his common providences towards all the children of men. Though he has endured man with understanding and freedom of will, yet he reserves to himself the government of him, and even of those very faculties by which he is qualified to govern himself.

(1.) The children of men are all under his eye, even their hearts are so, and all the motions and operations of their souls, which none know but they themselves, he knows better than they themselves, *ver. 13, 14.* Though the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet from thence he not only has a prospect of all the earth, but a particular inspection of all the inhabitants of the earth. He not only beholdeth them; but he looks upon them, he looks narrowly upon them, so the word here used is sometimes rendered; so narrowly, that not the least thought can escape his observation. Atheists think, that because he dwells above in heaven, he cannot or will not take notice of what is done here in this lower world, but from thence, as high as it is, he sees us all, and all persons and things, are naked and open before him.

(2.) Their hearts as well as their times are all in his hand. He fashioneth their hearts. He made them at first, formed the spirit of each man within him, then when he brought him into being. Hence he is called the Father of spirits: And this is a good argument to prove that he perfectly knows them; the artist that made the clock, can account for the motions of every wheel. David useth this argument, with application to himself, *Psalm cxxxix. 1-14.* He still moulds the hearts of men, turns them as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleaseth, to serve his own purposes, darkens or enlightens mens understanding, stiffens or bows their wills according as he is pleased to make use of them. He that fashions mens hearts fashions them alike; it is in hearts as in faces, though there is a great difference, and such a variety, as that no two faces are exactly of the same features, nor any two hearts exactly of the same temper, yet there is such a similitude, as that in some things all faces and all hearts agree, as in water face answers to face, *Prov. xxvii. 19.* He fashions them together, (so some read it) as the wheels of a watch, though of different shapes, sizes, and motions, yet are all put together to serve one and the same purpose, so the hearts of men and their dispositions, however varying from each other, and seeming to contradict one another, yet are all over-ruled to serve the divine purpose, which is one.

(3.) They, and all they do, are obnoxious to his judgment, for he considereth all their works, not only knows them, but weighs them, that he may render to every man according to his works, in the day, in the world of retribution, in the judgment and to eternity.

(4.) All the powers of the creature have a dependence upon him, and are of no account, of no avail at all without him, *ver. 16, 17.* It is much for the honour of God, that not only no force can prevail in opposition to him, but that no force can act but in dependence on him, and by a power derived from him.

1. The strength of a king is nothing without God: no king is sacred by his royal prerogatives, or the authority with which he is invested, for the powers of that kind that be ordained of God, and are what he makes them and no more. David was a king, and a man of war from his youth, and yet acknowledged God only to be his protector and saviour.

2. The strength of an army is nothing without God. The multitude of an host cannot secure those under whose command they act, unless God make them a security to them. A great army cannot be sure of victory, for when God pleaseth, one should chase a thousand.

3. The strength of a giant is nothing without God; a mighty man, such as Goliath was, is not delivered by his much strength, when his day comes to fall, neither the firmness nor activity of his body, neither the stoutness nor resolution of his mind, will stand him in any stead, any further than God is pleased to give him success. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, but let us all strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God, go forth, and go on in his strength.

4. The strength of a horse is nothing without God, *ver. 17. A horse is a vain thing for safety.* In war horses were then so highly accounted of, and so much depended on, that God forbade the kings of Israel to multiply horses, *Deut. xvii. 16.* lest they should be tempted to trust to them, and their confidence should thereby be taken off from God. David houghed the horses of the Syrians, *2 Sam. viii. 4.* here he houghs all the horses in the world, by pronouncing a horse a vain thing for safety in the day of battle. If the war-horse be unruly, and ill-managed, he may hurry his rider into danger, instead of carrying him out of danger. If he be killed under him, he may be his death, instead of saving his life. It is therefore our interest to make sure God's favour towards us, and then we may be sure of his power engaged for us, and need not fear whatever is against us.

5. We are to give God the glory of his special grace. In the midst of his acknowledgments of God's providence, he pronounceth those blessed that have Jehovah for their God, who governs the world, and has wherewithal to help them in every time of need, while they were miserable who had this and the other Baal for their God, which was so far from being able to hear and help them, that it was itself senseless and helpless, *ver. 12.*

Blessed



*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, even Israel, who had the knowledge of the true God, and were taken into covenant with him, and all others who own God for theirs, and are owned by him; for they also, whatever nation they are of, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. (1.) It is their wisdom that they take the Lord for their God, that they direct their homage and adoration there where it is due, and where the payment of it will not be in vain. (2.) It is their happiness, that they are the people whom God hath chosen for his own inheritance, whom he is pleased with, and honoured in, and whom he protects and takes care of, whom he cultivates and improves as a man doth his inheritance, Deut. xxxii. 9. Now let us observe here to the honour of divine grace.*

1. The regard which God has to his people, ver. 18, 19. God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favour and complacency is upon them that fear him; he looks upon them with delight, as the father on his children, as the bridegroom on his spouse, Isa. lxii. 5. While those that depend on arms and armies, on chariots and horses, perish in the disappointment of their expectations, God's people under his protection are safe, for he shall deliver their soul from death, when there seems to be but a sleep between them and it; if he do not deliver the body from temporal death, yet he will deliver the soul from spiritual and eternal death; their souls, whatever happens, shall live and praise him, either in this world, or in a better. From his bounty they shall be supplied with all necessities, he shall keep them alive in famine; when others die for want they shall live, which makes it a distinguishing mercy: When visible means fail, God would find out some way or other to supply them. He doth not say he will give them abundance, they have no reason either to desire it or to expect it, but he will keep them alive, they shall not starve; and when destroying judgments are abroad, it ought to be reckoned a great favour, for it is a very sensible one, and very obliging to have our lives given us for a prey. They that have the Lord for their God, shall find him their help, and their shield, ver. 20. In their difficulties he will assist them, they shall be helped over them, helped through them; in their dangers he will secure them, so that they shall not receive any real damage.

2. The regard which God's people have to him, and which we all ought to have in consideration of this.

1. We must wait for God; we must attend the motions of his providence and accommodate ourselves to them, and patiently expect the issue of them. Our souls must wait for him, ver. 20. we must not only in word and tongue profess a believing regard to God, but it must be inward and sincere, a secret and silent attendance on him.

2. We must rely on God. Hope in his mercy, in the goodness of his nature, though we have not an express promise to depend upon. They that fear God and his wrath, must hope in God and his mercy; for there is no flying from God, but by flying to him. These pious dispositions will not only consist together, but befriend each other; a holy fear of God, and yet at the same time a hope in his mercy. This is *trusting in his holy name*, ver. 21. in all that whereby he has made known himself to us, for our encouragement to serve him.

3. We must rejoice in God, ver. 21. And those do not truly rest in God, or do not know the unspeakable advantage they have by so doing; who do not rejoice in him at all times, because they that hope in God, hope for an eternalfulness of joy in his presence.

4. We must seek to him for that mercy which we hope in, ver. 22. Our expectations from God are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage our application to him; he will be sought unto for that which he has promised, and therefore the psalm concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer, *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us*; let us always have the comfort and benefit of it, not according as we merit from thee, but according as we hope in thee, i. e. according to the promise which thou hast in thy word given to us, and according to the faith which thou hast by the Spirit and grace wrought in us. If in singing these verses, we put forth a dependence upon God, and let out our desires towards him, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

# P S A L M XXXIV.

*This psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, as appears by the title, and yet there is little in it peculiar to that occasion, but that which is general, both by way of thanksgiving to God, and instruction to us. (1.) He praises God for the experience which he and others had had of his goodness, ver. 1-6. (2.) He encourageth all good people to trust in God, and to seek to him, ver. 7-10. (3.) He gives good counsel to us all, as unto children, to take heed of sin, and to make conscience of our duty both to God and man, ver. 11-14. (4.) To enforce this good counsel, he shews God's favour to the righteous, and his displeasure against the wicked, in which he sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, ver. 15-22. So that in singing this psalm, we are both to give glory to God, and to teach and admonish ourselves and one another.*

## A PSALM OF DAVID.

When he changed his behaviour before Abimelech: who drove him away, and he departed.

1. **I** WILL bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. 3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4. I fought the LORD and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. 6. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him; and saved him out of all his troubles. 7. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8. O taste and see, that the LORD is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him. 9. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. 10. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

The title of this psalm tells us both who penned it, and upon what occasion it was penned. David being forced to run his country, which was made too hot for him by the rage of Saul, fought for shelter as near it as

he could in the land of the Philistines; there it was soon discovered who he was, and he was brought before the king, who in the story is called Achish, his proper name, here Abimelech his title; and for fear he should be treated as a spy, or one that came thither upon design, he feigned himself to be a mad-man, (such there have been in every age, that even by idiots men might be taught to give God thanks for the use of their reason) that Achish might dismiss him as a contemptible man, rather than take cognizance of him as a dangerous man. And it had the effect he desired; by this stratagem he escaped the hand that otherwise would have handled him roughly. Now, (1.) We cannot justify David in this dissimulation. It ill became an honest man to feign himself to be what he was not, and a man of honour to feign himself to be a fool and a mad-man. If in sport we mimic those who have not so good an understanding as we think we have, we forget that God might have made their case ours. (2.) Yet we cannot but admire at the composedness of his spirit, and how far he was from any change of that when he changed his behaviour. Even when he was in that fright, or rather in that danger only, his heart was so fixed, trusting in God, that even then he penned this excellent psalm, which hath as much in it of the marks of a calm sedate spirit, as any psalm in all the book; and there is something very nice too in the composure, for every verse begins with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order. Happy they who can thus keep their temper, and keep their graces in exercise, even when they are tempted to change their behaviour.

In this former part of this psalm,

1. David engageth and exciteh himself to praise God. Though it was his fault that he changed his behaviour, yet it was God's mercy that he escaped, and the mercy was so much the greater in that God did not deal with him according to the desert of his dissimulation, and we must in every thing give thanks. He resolves, (1.) That he will praise God constantly. *I will bless the Lord at all times*, upon all occasions. He resolves to keep up stated times for his duty, to lay hold on all opportunities for it, and to renew his praises upon every fresh occurrence that furnisheth him with matter. If we hope to spend our eternity in praising God, it is fit we should spend as much as may be of our time in this work. (2.) That he will praise him openly; *his praise shall be continually in my mouth*. Thus he would shew how forward he was to own his obligations to the mercy of God, and how desirous to make others also sensible of theirs. (3.) That he will praise him heartily. *My soul shall make her boast in the Lord*, in my relation to him, and my interest in him, and expectations from him. This is not vain glory to glory in the Lord.

2. He calls upon others to join with him herein. He expects they will, ver. 2. *The humble shall hear thereof*, both of my deliverance and of my thankfulness, and be glad that a good man has so much favour shewed him, and a good God so much honour done him. Those have most comfort in God's mercies, both to others and to themselves, that are humble, and have the least confidence in their own merit and sufficiency. It pleased David to think that God's favours to him would rejoice the heart of every Israelite.

Three things he would have us all to concur with him in.

1. In great and high thoughts of God, which we should express in magnifying him, and exalting his name, ver. 3. we cannot make God greater or higher than he is, but if we adore him as infinitely great and higher than the highest, he is pleased to reckon this magnifying and exalting him. This we must do together. God's praises found best in concert, for so we praise him as the angels do in heaven. They that share in God's favour as all the saints do, should concur in his praises: and we should be as desirous of the assistance of our friends in returning thanks for mercies, as in praying for them.

We have reason to join in thanksgiving to God,

(1.) For his readiness to hear prayer, which all the saints have had the comfort of, for he never said to any of them, *seek ye me in vain*. (1.) David for his part will give it under his hand that he had found him a prayer-hearing God, ver. 4. *I sought the Lord in my distress*, intreated his favour, begged his help, and he heard me, answered my request presently, and delivered me from all my fears, both from the death I feared, and from the disquietment and disturbance I was put into by my fear of it. The former he doth by his providence working for us, the latter by his grace working in us, to silence our fears, and still the tumult of the spirits: And this is the greater mercy of the two, because the thing we fear is our trouble only, but our unbelieving distrustful fear of it is our sin, nay, and many times it is more our torment too than the thing itself would be, which perhaps would only touch the bone and the flesh, while the fear would prey upon the spirits, and put us out of the possession of our own soul. David's prayers helped to silence his fears; having sought the Lord, and left his case with him, he could with a great deal of ease expect the event. But David was a great and eminent man, we may not expect to be favoured as he was; have any others ever experienced the like benefit by prayer? Yes, (2.) Many besides him have looked unto God, by faith and prayer, and have been lightened by it, ver. 5. It has wonderfully revived and comforted them; witness Hannah, who when she had prayed *went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad*. When we look to the world, we are darkened, and perplexed, and at a loss: but when we look unto God, from him we have the light both of direction and joy, and our way is made both plain and pleasant. These here spoken of, that looked unto God, had their expectations raised, and the event did not frustrate them, their faces were not ashamed of their confidence. But perhaps these also were persons of great eminency, like David himself, and upon that account were highly favoured, or their numbers made them considerable; nay, (3.) This poor man cried, a single person, mean and inconsiderable, whom no man looked upon with any respect, or looked after with any concern: yet he was as welcome to the throne of grace as David, or any of his worthies; the Lord heard him, took cognizance of his case and of his prayers, and saved him out of all his trouble, ver. 6. God will regard the prayer of the destitute, Psal. cii. 17. Isa. lviii. 15.

(2.) For the ministration of the good angels about us, ver. 7. *The angel of the Lord*, i. e. a guard of angels (so some) but so unanimous in their service as if they were but one, or a guardian angel encampeth round about them that fear God, as the life-guard about the prince, and delivereth them. God makes use of the attendance of the good Spirits for the protection of his people from the malice and power of evil spirits, and more good offices the holy angels do us every day than we are aware of. Though in dignity and capacity of nature they are very much superior to us, though they retain their primitive rectitude, which we have lost, though they have constant employment in the upper world to praise God, and are entitled to a constant rest and bliss there, yet in obedience to their Maker, and in love to those that bear his image, they condescend to minister to the saints, and stand up for them against the powers of darkness; they not only visit them, but encamp round about them, adding for their good as really, though not as sensibly, as for Jacob's, Gen. xlii. 1. and Elissa's, 2 Kings vi. 17. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

He would have us to join with him in kind and good thoughts of God, ver. 8. *O taste, and see, that the Lord is good*. The goodness of God includes



cludes both the beauty and amiableness of his being, and the bounty and beneficence of his providence and grace; and accordingly, (1.) We must taste that he is a bountiful benefactor, relish the goodness of God in all his gifts to us, and reckon that the favour and sweetness of them. Let God's goodness be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. (2.) We must see that he is a beautiful being, and delight in the contemplation of his infinite perfections. By taste and sight we both make discoveries, and take complacency; taste and see God's goodness, i. e. take notice of it, and take the comfort of it, 1 Pet. ii. 3. He is good, for he makes all those truly blessed that trust in him; let us therefore be so convinced of his goodness, as thereby to be encouraged in the worst of times to trust in him.

3. He would have us join with him in a resolution to seek God and serve him, and continue in his fear, ver. 9. *O fear the Lord, ye his saints*; when we taste and see that he is good, we must not forget that he is great, and greatly to be feared; nay, even his goodness is the proper object of a filial reverence and awe, *they shall fear the Lord and his goodness*, Hof. iii. 5. *Fear the Lord*, i. e. worship him, and make conscience of your duty to him in every thing; not fear him and shun him, but fear him and seek him, ver. 10. as a people seek unto their God; apply yourselves to him, and portion yourselves in him. To encourage us to fear God and seek him, it is here promised that those that do so, even in this wanting world, shall want no good thing, Heb. *They shall not want all good things*, i. e. They shall have all good things, as that they shall have no reason to complain of the want of any. As to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of the spiritual life, 2 Cor. xii. 9. *Psal. lxxxiv. 11.* And as to this life they shall have what is necessary to the support of it from the hand of God, as a father he will feed them with food convenient; what further comforts they desire, they shall have them as far as infinite wisdom sees good, and what they want in one thing shall be made up in another. What God denies them he will give them grace to be content without, and then they do not want it, *Deut. iii. 26.* Paul had all, and abounded, because he was content, *Phil. iv. 11-18.* Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency, want nothing, for in him they have enough. However it goes with the young lions, they shall lack and suffer hunger: they that live upon common providence, as the lions do, shall want that satisfaction which they have that live by faith in the promise. They that trust to themselves, and think their own hands sufficient for them, shall want, for bread is not always to the wife, but verily they shall be fed that trust in God, and desire to be at his finding. They that are ravenous and prey upon all about them shall want, but *the meek shall inherit the earth*, they shall not want, that with quietness work and mind their own business; plain-hearted Jacob has pottage enough, when Esau the cunning hunter is ready to perish for hunger.

11. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 12. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days; that he may see good? 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. 14. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace, and pursue it. 15. The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. 16. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. 17. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles. 18. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. 20. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. 21. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. 22. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

David in this latter part of the psalm undertakes to teach children; though a man of war, and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him; though now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people from his own experience. It doth not appear that he had now any children of his own, at least none that was grown up to a capacity of being taught; but by divine inspiration he instructs the children of his people. Those that were in years would not be taught by him, though he had ordered them his service, *Psal. xxxii. 8.* but he has hopes that the tender branches will be more easily bent, and that children and young people will be more tractable, and therefore he calls together a congregation of them, ver. 11. Come ye children that are now in your learning age, and are now to lay up a stock of knowledge which you must live upon all your days; ye children that are foolish and ignorant, and need to be taught: perhaps he intends especially those children whose parents neglected to instruct and catechise them, and it is as great a piece of charity to put those children to school, whose parents are not in a capacity to teach them, as to feed those children whose parents have not bread for them. Observe, (1.) What he expects from them, *hearken unto me*, leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me. (2.) What he undertakes to teach them: *The fear of the Lord*, inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier, but he doth not say to the children, I will teach you to play upon the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state-policy, but I will teach you the fear of the Lord, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves, and to teach our children.

1. He supposeth that we all aim to be happy, ver. 12. *What man is he that desireth life?* i. e. (as it follows) not only to see many days, but to see good comfortable days; *non est vivere, sed valere vita.* It is asked, who will wish to live a long and pleasant life? and it is easily answered, *who doth not?* Surely this must look further than time and this present world, for man's life on earth at best consists but of few days, and those full of trouble. What man is he that would be eternally happy? that would see many days, as many as the days of heaven; that would see good in that world where all bliss is in perfection, without the least alloy; who would see that good before him now by faith and hope, and enjoy it shortly? Who would? alas, very few have that in their thoughts; most ask, *who will show us any good?* but few ask, *what shall we do to inherit eternal life?* This question implies there are some such.

VOL. II. No. LXXXII.\*

2. He prescribes the true and only way to happiness, both in this world and that to come, ver. 13, 14. Would we pass comfortably through the world, and out of the world, our constant care must be to keep a good conscience; and in order to that, (1.) We must learn to bridle our tongues, and be careful what we say; that we never speak amiss to God's dishonour, or our neighbour's prejudice; *keep thy tongue from evil speaking*, lying and slandering. So great a way doth this go in religion, that if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; and so little a way doth religion go without this, that he that bridleth not his tongue, his religion is vain. (2.) We must be upright and sincere in every thing we say, and not double-tongued, our words must be the indications of our minds, our lips must be kept from speaking guile either to God or man. (3.) We must leave all our sins, and resolve we will have no more to do with them. Depart from evil, from evil works and evil workers: from the sins others commit, and which we have formerly allowed ourselves in. (4.) It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and live to some purpose. We must not only depart from evil, but we must do good; good for ourselves, especially for our own souls, employing them well, furnishing them with a good treasure, and fitting them for another world; and, as we have ability and opportunity, we must do good to others also. (5.) Because nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails, which is the summary both of law and gospel, both of grace and glory, than strife and contention, which brings confusion and every evil work; we must seek peace and pursue it, have a peaceable disposition, study the things that make for peace, do nothing to break the peace and to make mischief. If peace seem to flee from us we must pursue it; *follow peace with all men*, stick at no pains, no expence to preserve and recover peace, be willing to deny ourselves a great deal both in honour and interest for peace-sake. These excellent directions in the way to life and good, are transcribed into the New Testament, and made part of our gospel duty, 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11. And perhaps David, in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss, will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.

3. He enforceth these directions by setting before us the happiness of the godly in the love and favour of God, and the miserable state of the wicked under his displeasure. Here is life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse plainly stated before us, that we may choose life and live. See *Isa. iii. 10, 11.*

1. *Wo to the wicked it shall be ill with them*, however they may bless themselves in their own way.

(1.) God is against them, and then they cannot but be miserable; sad is the case of that man who by his sins has made his Maker his enemy, his destroyer. *The face of the Lord is against them that do evil*, ver. 16. Sometimes God is said to turn his face from them, *Jer. xviii. 17.* because they have forsaken him; here he is said to set his face against them, because they have fought against him: and for certain God is able to outface the most proud and daring sinners, and can frown them into hell.

(2.) *Ruin is before them*: this will follow of course, if God be against them, for he is able both to kill and to cast into hell. (1.) The land of the living shall be no place for them or theirs. When God sets his face against them, he shall not only cut them off, but *cut off the remembrance of them*, shall, when they are alive, bury them in obscurity, when they are dead, shall bury them in oblivion. He shall root out their posterity, by whom they shall be remembered: he shall pour disgrace upon their achievements which they gloried in, and for which they thought they should have been remembered. It is certain there is no lasting honour but that which comes from God. (2.) There shall be a sting in their death, *evil shall slay the wicked*, ver. 21. Their death shall be miserable, and so it will certainly be, though they die in a bed of down, or in the bed of honour. Death to them has a curse in it, and is the king of terrors; to them it is an evil, an only evil. It was very well observed by Dr. Hammond, that the evil here which slays the wicked, is the same word in the singular number that is used, ver. 19. for the afflictions of the righteous, to intimate that godly people have many troubles, and yet they do them no hurt; but are made to work for good to them, for God will deliver them out of them all; whereas wicked people have fewer troubles, fewer evils befall them, perhaps but one, and yet that one may prove their utter ruin. One trouble with a curse in it kills and slays and doth execution; but many, with a blessing in them, are harmless, nay, gainful. (3.) Desolation will be their everlasting portion; they that are wicked themselves oftentimes hate the righteous, name and things have an implacable enmity to them and their righteousness; but they shall be desolate, shall be condemned as guilty, and laid waste for ever; shall be for ever forsaken and abandoned of God and all good angels and men, and those that are so are desolate indeed.

2. Yet, *say to the righteous, it shall be well with them*; all good people are under God's special favour and protection. We are here assured of that, under a great variety of instances and expressions.

1. God takes special notice of good people, and takes no ice who have their eyes ever to him, and who make conscience of their duty to him. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous*, ver. 15. to direct and guide them, protect and keep them. Parents that are very fond of a child, will not let it be out of their sight; none of God's children are ever from under his eye, but on them he looks with a singular complacency, as well as with a watchful and tender concern.

2. They are sure of an answer of peace to their prayers. All God's people are a praying people, and they cry in prayer, which notes great importunity; but is it to any purpose? Yes, (1.) God takes notice of what we say, ver. 17. *They cry and the Lord heareth them*, and hears them so as to make it appear he has a regard to them. *His ears are open to their prayers*, to receive them all, and to receive them readily and with delight. Though he has been a God hearing prayer, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, yet his ear is not heavy. There is no rhetoric, nothing charming in a cry, yet God's ears are open to it, as the tender mother's to the cry of her sucking child, which another would take no notice of. *The righteous cry and the Lord heareth*, ver. 17. This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God, and it is their constant comfort that God hears them.

(2.) He not only takes notice of what we say, but is ready to us for our relief, ver. 18. *He is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth them.* Note, 1. It is the character of the righteous, whose prayers God will hear, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, that is, humbled for sin, and emptied of self; they are low in their own eyes, and have no confidence in their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only. 2. Those who are so, have God nigh unto them, to comfort and support them, that the spirit may not be broken more than is meet, lest it should fail before him. See *Isa. lvii. 15.* Though God is high and dwells on high, yet he is near to those, who, being of a contrite spirit, know how to value his favour, and will save them from sinking under their burdens; he is near them to good purpose.

3. They are taken under the special protection of the divine government, ver. 20. *He keepeth all his bones: not only his soul but his body; not only*



only his body in general, but every bone in it, *not one of them is broken*. He that has a broken heart shall not have a broken bone; for David himself had found, that when he had a contrite heart that *broken bones were made to rejoice*, Psal. li. 8, 17. One would not expect to meet with any thing of Christ here, and yet this scripture is said to be fulfilled in him, *John xix. 36*. when the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with him, but did not break his, they being under the protection of this promise, as well as of the type, even the paschal lamb, *a bone of him shall not be broken*: the promises being made good to Christ, through him are sure to all the seed. It doth not follow but that a good man may have a broken bone; but many a time, by the watchful providence of God concerning him, it is wonderfully prevented, and the preservation of his bones is the effect of this promise, and if he have a broken bone, sooner or later, it shall be made whole, at furthest at the resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power.

4. They are, and shall be, delivered out of their troubles: (1.) It is supposed that they have their share of crosses in this world, perhaps a greater share than others. In the world they must have tribulation, that they may be conformed both to the will of God, and to the example of Christ, *ver. 19*. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, witness David and his afflictions, *Psal. cxxxii. 1*. There are those that hate them, *ver. 21*. and they are continually aiming to do them a mischief; their God loves them, and therefore corrects them, so that between the mercy of heaven, and the malice of hell, the afflictions of the righteous must needs be many. (2.) God has engaged for their deliverance and salvation. *He delivereth them out of all their troubles*, *ver. 17*. And again, *ver. 19*. He saveth them, *ver. 19*. so that though they may fall into trouble, it shall not be their ruin. This promise of their deliverance is explained, *ver. 22*. Whatever troubles befall them, (1.) They shall not hurt their better part. *The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servant*, from the power of the grave, *Psal. xlix. 15*, and from the sting of every affliction. He keeps them from sinning in their troubles, which is the only thing that would do them a mischief, and keeps them from despair, and from being put out of the possession of their own souls. (2.) They shall not hinder their everlasting bliss; *none of them that trust in him shall be desolate*, i. e. They shall not be comfortless, for they shall not be cut off from their communion with God. No man is desolate, but he whom God has forsaken, nor is any man undone till he is in hell. Those that are God's faithful servants, that make it their care to please him, and their business to honour him, and in doing so trust him to protect and reward them, and with good thoughts of him refer themselves to him, have reason to be easy whatever befalls them, for they are safe, and shall be happy.

In singing these verses, let us be confirmed in the choice we have made of the ways of God; let us be quickened in his service, and greatly encouraged by the assurances he has given of the particular care he takes of all those that faithfully adhere to him.

# P S A L M XXXV.

David in this psalm appeals to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, against his enemies that hated and persecuted him. It is supposed that Saul and his party are the persons he means, for with them he had the greatest struggles. (1.) He complains to God of the injuries they did him, they strove with him, fought against him, *ver. 1*. persecuted him, *ver. 3*. sought his ruin, *ver. 4, 7*. accused him falsely, *ver. 11*. abused him basely, *ver. 15, 16*. and all his friends, *ver. 20*. and triumphed over him, *ver. 21—25, 26*. (2.) He pleads his own innocency, that he never gave them any provocation, *ver. 7—19*. but on the contrary, had studied to oblige them, *ver. 12, 13, 14*. (3.) He prays to God to protect and deliver him, and appear for him, *ver. 1, 2*. to comfort him, *ver. 3*. to be nigh to him and rescue him, *ver. 17—22*. to plead his cause, *ver. 23, 24*. to defeat all the designs of his enemies against him, *ver. 3, 4*. and to disappoint their expectations of his fall, *ver. 19—25, 26*. and, lastly, to countenance all his friends and encourage them, *ver. 27*. (4.) He prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, *ver. 4, 5, 6—8*. (5.) He promiseth himself that he shall yet see better days, *ver. 9, 10*. and promiseth God that he will then attend him with his praises, *ver. 18, 28*. In singing this psalm, and praying over it, we must take heed of applying it to any little peevish quarrels and enmities of our own, and of expressing by it any uncharitable revengeful resentments of injuries done to us, for Christ has taught us to forgive our enemies and not to pray against them, but to pray for them, as he did; but, (1.) we may comfort ourselves with the testimony of our consciences, concerning our innocency, with reference to those that are anyway injurious to us, and with hopes that God will in his own way and time right us, and in the mean time support us. (2.) We ought to apply it to the public enemies of Christ and his kingdom, typified by David and his kingdom, to resent the indignities done to Christ's honour, to pray to God to plead the just and injured cause of christianity and serious godliness, and to believe that God will in due time glorify his own name in the ruin of all the irreconcilable enemies of his church, that will not repent to give him glory.

## A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **P**LEAD my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. 2. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. 4. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. 5. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. 6. Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the LORD persecute them. 7. For without cause have they hid from me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. 8. Let destruction come upon him at unawares, and let his net that he hath hid, catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall. 9. And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: he shall rejoice in his salvation. 10. All my

bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy, from him that spoileth him?

In these verses we have,

1. David's representation of his case to God, setting forth the restless rage and malice of his persecutors; he was God's servant, expressly appointed by him to be what he was, followed his conduct, and aimed at his glory in the way of duty, had lived (as St Paul speaks) *in all good conscience before God unto this day*; and yet there were those that strove with him, that did their utmost to oppose his advancement, and made all the interest they could against him, they fought against him, *ver. 1*. not only undermined him closely and secretly, but openly avowed their opposition to him, and set themselves to do him all the mischief they could. They persecuted him with an unwearied enmity; *sought after his soul*, *ver. 4*. i. e. his life, no less would satisfy their bloody minds; they aimed to disquiet his spirit, and put that into disorder; nor was it a sudden passion against him that they harboured, but an inveterate malice; they devised his hurt, laid their heads together, and set their wits on work, not only to do him a mischief, but to find out ways and means to ruin him. They treated him, who was the greatest blessing of his country, as if he had been the curse and plague of it, hunted him as a dangerous beast of prey, they digged a pit for him, and laid a net in it, that they might have him at their mercy, *ver. 7*. They took a great deal of pains in persecuting him, for they digged a pit, *Psal. vii. 15*. and very close and crafty they were in carrying on their designs; the old serpent taught them subtilty, they hid their net from David and his friends, but in vain, for they could not hide it from God. And lastly, he found himself an unequal match for them. His enemy, especially Saul, was too strong for him, *ver. 10*. for he had the army at his command, and assumed to himself the sole power of making laws and giving judgments, attainted and condemned whom he pleased, carried not a sceptre, but a javelin in his hand, to cast at any man that stood in his way, such was the manner of the king, and all about him must do as he bade them, right or wrong. The king's word is a law, and every thing must be carried with a high hand, he has fields and vineyards, and preferments at his dispose, *1 Sam. xxii. 7*. But David is poor and needy, has nothing to make friends with, and therefore has none to take his part, but men (as we say) of broken fortunes, *1 Sam. xxii. 2*. and therefore no marvel that Saul spoiled him of what little he had got, and the interest he had made. If the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, who can contend with them? Note, It is no new thing for the most righteous men, and the most righteous cause, to meet with many mighty and malicious enemies; Christ himself is striven with, and fought against, and war made upon the holy seed, and we are not to marvel at the matter, it is a fruit of the whole enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman.

2. His appeal to God concerning his integrity, and the justice of his cause. If a fellow-subject had wronged him, he might have appealed to his prince, as St. Paul did to Cæsar; but when this prince wronged him, he appealed to his God, who is prince and Judge of the kings of the earth. *Plead my cause, O Lord*, *ver. 1*. Note, A righteous cause may with the greatest satisfaction imaginable be laid before a righteous God, and referred to him to give judgment upon it; for he perfectly knows the merits of it, holds the balance exactly even, and with him there is no respect of persons. God knew that they were without cause his enemies, and that they had without cause digged pits for him, *ver. 7*. Note, It will be a comfort to us when men do us wrong, if our consciences can witness for us that we have never done them any. It was so to St. Paul, *Acts xxv. 10*. *To the Jews have I done no wrong*. We are apt to justify our uneasiness at the injuries men do us, that we never gave them any cause to use us so, whereas this should more than any thing make us easy, for then we may the more securely expect that God will plead our cause.

3. His prayer to God to manifest himself both for him and to him in this trial. (1.) For him: he prays that God would fight against his enemies, so as to disable them to hurt him, and defeat their designs against him, *ver. 1*. That he would take hold of shield and buckler, for the Lord is a man of war, *Exod. xv. 3*. and that he would stand up for his help, *ver. 2*. for he had few that would stand up for him, and if he had never so many, they would stand him in no stead without God. That God would stop their way, that they might not overtake him when he fled from them; this prayer we may put up against our persecutors, that God would restrain them, and stop their way. (2.) To him: *say unto my soul, I am thy salvation*, i. e. Let me have inward comfort under all these outward troubles, to support my soul which they strike at. Let God be my salvation, not only my favour out of my present troubles, but my everlasting bliss; let me have that salvation not only which he is the author of, but which consists in his favour. And let me know it, let me have the comfortable assurance of it in my own breast. If God by his spirit witness to our spirits that he is our salvation, we have enough, we need desire no more to make us happy; and this is a powerful support when men persecute us. If God be our friend, no matter who is our enemy.

4. His prospect of the destruction of his enemies, which he prays for, not in malice or revenge; we find how patiently he bore Shimei's curses. So let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him: and we cannot suppose that he that was so meek in his conversation, should give vent to any intemperate heat or passion in his devotion; but by the spirit of prophecy he foretells the just judgments of God that would come upon them for their great wickedness, their malice, cruelty, and perfidiousness, and especially their enmity to the counsels of God, the interests of religion, and that reformation which they knew David, if ever he had power in his hand, would be an instrument of. They seemed to be hardened in their sins, and to be of the number of those who have sinned unto death, and are not to be prayed for, *Jer. vii. 16*.—*xi. 14*.—*xiv. 11*. *1 John v. 16*. As for Saul himself it is probable David knew that God had rejected him, and had forbidden Samuel to mourn for him, *1 Sam. xvi. 1*. And these predictions look further, and read the doom of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, as appears by comparing *Rom. xi. 9, 10*.

He here prays, (1.) Against his many enemies, *ver. 4, 5, 6*. *Let them be confounded, &c.* Or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, *They shall be confounded, they shall be turned back*. This may be taken as a prayer for their repentance, for all penitents are put to shame for their sins, and turned back from them; or if they were not brought to repentance, that they might be defeated and disappointed in their designs against him, and so put to shame. But though they should in some degree prevail yet he foresees that it would be to their own ruin at last; they shall be as chaff before the wind, so unable will wicked men be to stand before the judgments of God, and so certainly will they be driven away by them, *Psal. i. 4*. Their way shall be *dark and slippery, darkness and slipperiness*; (so the margin reads it) the way of sinners is so, for they walk in darkness, and in continual danger of falling.



ling into sin, into hell; and it will prove so at last, for *their foot shall slide in due time*, Deut. xxxii. 35. But this is not the worst of it; even chaff before the wind may perhaps be stopped and find a place of rest, and though the way be dark and slippery, it is possible a man may keep footing; but it is here foretold that the angel of the Lord shall chase them, ver. 5. so that they shall find no rest; shall persecute them, ver. 6. so that they cannot possibly escape the pit of destruction. As God's angels encamp about them that fear him, so they encamp against them that fight against him. They are the ministers of his justice as well as of his mercy. Those that make God their enemy, make all the holy angels their enemies. (2.) He prays against his one mighty enemy, ver. 8. *Let destruction come upon him*. It is probable he means Saul, who laid snares for him, and aimed at his destruction. David vowed his hand should not be upon him, he would not be judge in his own cause; but at the same time foretold that *the Lord would smite him*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 10. and here, that the net he had hid should catch himself, and into that very destruction he should fall, which was remarkably fulfilled in the ruin of Saul, for he had laid a plot to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines, 1 Sam. xviii. 25. that was the net which he hid for him, under pretence of doing him honour, and in that very net was he himself taken, for he fell by the hand of the Philistines when his day came to fall.

5. His prospect of his own deliverance, which having committed his cause to God, he did not doubt of, ver. 9, 10. (1.) He hoped that he should have the comfort of it; *my soul shall be joyful*, not in mine own ease and safety, but in the Lord, and in his favour; in his promise, and in his salvation according to the promise. Joy in God, and in his salvation, is the only true solid satisfying joy. They whose souls are sorrowful in the Lord, that sow in tears, and sorrow after a godly sort, need not question but that in due time their souls shall be joyful in the Lord, for gladness is sown for them, and they shall at last enter into the joy of their Lord. (2.) He promised that then God should have the glory of it, ver. 10. *All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?* (1.) He will praise God with the whole man, with all that is within him, and with all the strength and vigour of his soul, intimated by his bones which are within the body, and are the strength of it. (2.) He will praise him as one of peerless and unparalleled perfection; we cannot express how great and good God is, and therefore must praise him by acknowledging him a non-such; *Lord, who is like unto thee?* No such patron of oppressed innocence, no such punisher of triumphant tyranny. The formation of our bones so wonderfully, so curiously, Eccles. xi. 5. Psalm cxxxix. 16. the serviceableness of our bones, and the preservation of them, and especially the life which at the resurrection shall be breathed upon the dry bones, and make them flourish as an herb, oblige every bone in our bodies, if they could speak, to say, *Lord, who is like unto thee?* and willingly to undergo any services or sufferings for him.

11. False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. 12. They rewarded me evil for good, to the spoiling of my soul. 13. But as for me, when they were sick, my cloathing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend, or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. 15. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not: they did tear me, and ceased not. 16. With hypocritical mockers in feasts: they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

Two very ill things David here lays to the charge of his enemies, to make good his appeal to God against them; perjury and ingratitude.

1. Perjury, ver. 11. When Saul would have David attainted of treason, in order to his being outlawed, perhaps he did it with the formalities of a legal prosecution, produced witnesses which swore some treasonable words or overt-acts against him, and he being not present to clear himself, or if he had, it had been all one, Saul adjudged him a traitor; this he compares of here as the highest piece of injustice imaginable: *false witnesses did rise up*, who would swear any thing, *they laid to my charge things that I knew not*, nor ever thought of. See how much the honours, estates, liberties, and lives even of the best of men, lie at the mercy of the worst, against whose false oaths, innocence itself has no fence; and what reason we have to acknowledge with thankfulness the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, to which it is owing that there is not more mischief done that way than is. This instance of the wrong done to David, was typical, and had its accomplishment in the Son of David, against whom false witnesses did arise, Matth. xxvi. 60. And if we be at any time charged with what we are innocent of, let us not think it strange, as though some new thing happened us, so persecuted they the prophets, even the great Prophet.

2. Ingratitude: call a man ungrateful and you can call him no worse; this was the character of David's enemies, ver. 12. *They rewarded me evil for good*. A great deal of good service he had done to his king, witness his harp, witness Goliath's sword, witness the forekins of the Philistines; and yet his king vowed his death, and his country is made too hot for him. This is *to the spoiling of his soul*, i. e. the base unkind usage robs him of his comfort, and cuts him to the heart more than any thing else.

Nay, he had not only deserved well of the public, but of those particular persons that were now most bitter against him. Probably it was then well known who he meant, it may be Saul himself for one, whom he was sent for to attend upon, when he was melancholy and ill, and to whom he was serviceable to drive away the evil spirit, not with his harp, but with his prayers; to others of the courtiers, it is likely he had shewed this respect while he lived at court, who now were of all others most abusive to him: herein he was a type of Christ, to whom this wicked world was very ungrateful, John x. 32. *Many good works have I shewed you from my Father, for which of these do you stone me?* David here shews,

1. How tenderly, and with what a cordial affection he had carried it towards them in their afflictions, ver. 13, 14. *They were sick*. Note, Even the palaces and courts of princes are not exempt from the jurisdiction of death, and the visitation of sickness. Now when these people were sick, (1.) David mourned for them, and sympathized with them in their grief. They were nothing a kin to him, he was under no obligations to them, would lose nothing by their death, but perhaps he a gainer by it, and yet he behaved himself as though they had been his nearest relations, purely from a principle of compassion and humanity. David was a man of war, and of a bold, stout spirit, and yet was thus susceptible of the impressions of

sympathy, forgot the bravery of the hero, and seemed wholly made up of love and pity; it was a rare composition of hardness and tenderness, courage and compassion in the same breast. Observe, He took on as for a brother or mother, which intimates that it is our duty, and well becomes us to lay to heart the sickness, and sorrow, and death, of our near relations. Those that do not are justly stigmatized as without natural affection. (2.) He prayed for them, he discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls, and since he could not otherwise be helpful to them, he helped them with his prayers to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of one who had so great an interest in heaven, were of more value than perhaps they knew and considered. With his prayer he joined humiliation and self-affliction, both in his diet, he fasted, at least, from pleasant bread, and in his dress, he clothed himself with sackcloth, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin; for this was the guise and practice of a penitent: We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for them themselves. His fasting also put an edge upon his praying, and was an expression of the ardency of it: he was so intent on his devotions, that he had no appetite to eat, nor would allow himself time for eating. *My prayer returned into mine own bosom*, i. e. I had the comfort of having done my duty, and of having approved myself a loving neighbour, though I could not thereby win upon them, nor make them my friends. We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful soever they are, for our rejoicing will be this, *the testimony of our conscience*.

2. How basely and insolently, and with what a brutish enmity, and worse than brutish they had carried it towards him, ver. 15, 16. *In mine adversity they rejoiced*. When he fell under the frowns of Saul, was banished the court, and persecuted as a criminal, they were pleased, were glad of his calamities, and got together in their drunken clubs, to make themselves and one another merry with the disgrace of this great favourite. Well might he call them *abjects*, for nothing could be more vile and sordid, than to triumph in the fall of a man of such unstained honour, and consummate virtue. But this was not all: (1.) They tore him, rent his good name without mercy, said all the ill they could of him, and fastened upon him all the reproach their cursed wit and malice could reach to. (2.) *They gnashed upon him with their teeth*, i. e. they never spoke of him but with the greatest indignation imaginable, as those that would have eaten him up, if they could. David was the fool in the play, and his disappointment at the table-talk of the hypocritical mockers at feasts, it was the song of the drunkards; the comedians, who may be fitly called hypocritical mockers, (for what doth an hypocrite signify but a stage-player?) and whose comedies, it is likely, were acted at feasts and balls, chose David for their subject, bantered and abused him, while the auditory, in token of their agreement with the plot, hummed, and *gnashed upon him with their teeth*; such has often been the hard fate of the best of men: the apostles were made a spectacle to the world. David was looked upon with ill-will for no other reason, but because he was caressed by the people: It is a vexation of spirit which attends even a right work, that *for this a man is envied of his neighbours*, Eccles. iv. 4. And *who can stand before envy?* Prov. xxvii. 4.

17. LORD, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. 18. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people. 19. Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye, that hate me without a cause. 20. For they speak not peace, but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. 21. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. 22. This thou hast seen, O LORD, keep not silence: LORD, be not far from me. 23. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God, and my Lord. 24. Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness, and let them not rejoice over me. 25. Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: Let them not say, we have swallowed him up. 26. Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together, that rejoice at mine hurt: Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour, that magnify themselves against me. 27. Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. 28. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise all the day long.

In these verses, as before,

1. David describes the great injustice, malice, and insolence of his persecutors, pleading this with God, as a reason why he should protect him from them, and appear against them. (1.) They were very unrighteous; they were his enemies wrongfully, for he never gave them any provocation; *they hated him without a cause*; nay, for that for which they ought rather to have loved and honoured him. This is quoted with application to Christ, and is said to be fulfilled in him, John xv. 25. *They hated me without cause*. (2.) They were very rude; they could not find in their hearts to shew him common civility; they speak not peace; if they meet him, they had not the good manners to give him the time of the day; like Joseph's brethren, that could not *speak peaceably to him*, Gen. xxxvii. 4. (3.) They were very proud and scornful, ver. 21. *They opened their mouth wide against me*, i. e. they shouted and huzzaed when they saw his fall; they bawled after him when he was forced to quit the court, Aha, aha, this is the day we longed to see. (4.) They were very barbarous and base, for they trampled upon him when he was down, rejoiced at his hurt, and *magnified themselves against him*, ver. 26. *Turba rem sequitur fortunam, ut semper, & odit damnatos*. Thus when the son of David was run upon by the rulers, the people cried, *Crucify him, crucify him*. (5.) They set themselves against all the sober good people that adhered to David, ver. 20. *They devised deceitful matters*, to trepan and ruin them that are quiet in the land. Note, 1. It is the character of the godly in the land, that they are the quiet in the land; that they live in all dutiful subjection to government and governors in the Lord, and endeavour, as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men, however they have been misrepresented as enemies to Caesar, and hurtful to kings and provinces. *I am for peace*, Psalm cxx. 7. 2. Though the people



people of God are and study to be a quiet people, yet it has been the common practice of their enemies to devise deceitful matters against them. All the belhish arts of malice and falsehood are made use of to render them odious or despicable, their words and actions misconstrued, even that which they abhor fathered upon them, laws made to ensnare them, *Dan. vi. 4.* and all to ruin them and root them out. They that hated David, thought scorn, like Haman, to lay hands on him alone, but contrived to involve all the religious people of the land in the same ruin with him.

2. He appeals to God against them, the God to whom vengeance belongs; appeals to his knowledge, *ver. 22. This thou hast seen*; they had falsely accused him, but God that knoweth all things, knew that he did not falsely accuse them, nor make them worse than really they were. They had carried on their plots against him with a great deal of secrecy, *ver. 15. I knew it not till long after*, when they themselves gloried in it; but thine eye was upon them in their close cabals, and thou art a witness of all they have said and done against me and thy people. He appeals to God's justice, *Awake to my judgment, even to my cause*, and let it have a hearing at thy bar, *ver. 23. Judge me, O Lord my God*, i. e. Pass sentence upon this appeal according to the righteousness of thy nature and government: See this explained by Solomon, *1 Kings viii. 31, 32.* When thou art appealed to, *hear in heaven, and judge by condemning the wicked, and justifying the righteous.*

3. He prays earnestly to God to appear graciously for him and his friends, against his and their enemies, that by his providence the struggle might issue to the honour and comfort of David, and to the conviction and confusion of his persecutors.

(1.) He prays that God would act for him, and not stand by as a spectator, *ver. 17. Lord, How long wilt thou look on?* How long wilt thou connive at the wickedness of the wicked? Rescue my soul from the destructions they are plotting against it; rescue my darling, my only one from the lions. My soul is my only one, and therefore the greater is the shame, if I neglect it, and the greater the loss if I lose it: It is my only one, and therefore ought to be my darling, ought to be carefully protected and provided for. It is my soul that is in danger, Lord rescue it; it doth in a peculiar manner belong to the Father of spirits, therefore claim thine own; it is thine, save it! *Lord keep not silence!* as if thou didst consent to what is done against me, *Lord, be not far from me!* *ver. 22.* as if I were a stranger that thou art not concerned for; let me not be beheld afar off, as the proud are.

(2.) He prays that his enemies might not have cause to rejoice, *ver. 19. Let them not rejoice over me*; and again, *ver. 24. not so much because it would be a mortification to him to be trampled upon by the subjects, but because it would turn to the dishonour of God, and the reproach of his confidence in God, it would harden the hearts of his enemies in their wickedness, and confirm them in their enmity to him, and would be a great discouragement to all the pious Jews that were friends to his righteous cause.* He prays that he might never be in such imminent danger, as that they should say in their hearts, *Alas, so would we have it*, *ver. 25.* much more that he might not be reduced to such extremity, as that they should say, *We have swallowed him up*, for then they will reflect upon God himself. But, on the contrary, that they might be ashamed and brought to confusion together, *ver. 26.* as before, *ver. 4.* he desires his innocency might be so cleared, as that they might be ashamed of the calumnies with which they had loaded him, that his interest might be so confirmed, as that they might be ashamed of their designs against him, and their expectations of his ruin, that they might either be brought to that shame which would be a step towards their reformation; or that that might be their portion, which would be their everlasting misery.

(3.) He prays that his friends might have cause to rejoice and give glory to God, *ver. 27.* notwithstanding the arts that were used to blacken David, and make him odious, and to frighten people from owning him: there were some that favoured his righteous cause, that knew he was wronged, and bore a good affection to him, and he prays for them; (1.) That they might rejoice with him in his joys. It is a great pleasure to all that are good, to see an honest man and an honest cause, prevail and prosper, and those that heartily espouse the interests of God's people, and are willing to take their lot with them, even when they are run down, and trampled upon, shall in due time shout for joy, and be glad, for the righteous cause will at length be a victorious cause. (2.) That they might join with him in his praises, let them say continually, *The Lord be magnified by us and others, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.* Note, (1.) The great God hath pleasure in the prosperity of good people, not only of his family the church in general, but of every particular servant in his family; he hath pleasure in the prosperity both of their temporal and of their spiritual affairs, and delights not in their griefs; for he doth not afflict willingly; and we ought therefore to have pleasure in their prosperity, and not to envy it. (2.) When God in his providence shews his good will to the prosperity of his servants, and the pleasure he takes in it, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness to his praise, and to say, *The Lord be magnified.*

Lastly, The mercy he hoped to win by prayer, he promiseth to wear with praise; *I will give thee thanks*, as the author of my deliverance, *ver. 18.* and *my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness*, the justice of thy judgments, and the equity of all thy dispensations; and this, (1.) Publicly, as one that took a pleasure in owning his obligations to his God, for as he was from being ashamed of them, he will do it in the great congregation, and among much people, that God might be honoured, and many edified. (2.) Constantly; he will speak God's praise every day, (so it may be read); and all the day long, for it is a subject that will never be exhausted, no not by the endless praises of saints and angels.

## P S A L M XXXVI.

It is uncertain when and upon what occasion David penned this psalm, probably when he was struck at either by Saul or by Absalom; for in it he complains of the malice of his enemies against him, but triumphs in the goodness of God to him. We are here led to consider, and it will do us good to consider seriously, (1.) The sinfulness of sin, and how mischievous it is, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) The goodness of God, and how gracious he is, (1.) To all his creatures in general, *ver. 5, 6.* (2.) To his own people in a special manner, *ver. 7—9.* With which the Psalmist is encouraged to pray for all the saints, *ver. 10.* for himself in particular, and his own preservation, *ver. 11.* and to triumph in the certain fall of his enemies, *ver. 12.* If in singing this psalm our hearts be duly affected with the hatred of sin, and satisfaction in God's loving kindness, we sing it with grace and understanding.

1 To the chief musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID the servant of the Lord.

1. THE transgression of the wicked faith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. 2. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes,

until his iniquity be found to be hateful. 3. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good. 4. He deviseth mischief upon his bed, he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

David in the title of this psalm is styled the servant of the Lord: why in this and not any other, except in *Psalm xviii. title*, no reason can be given; but so he was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but as a king, as a prophet, as one employed in serving the interests of God's kingdom among men, more immediately, and more eminently than any other in his day. He glories in it, *Psalm cxvi. 16.* it is no disparagement, but an honour to the greatest of men, to be the servants of the great God; it is the highest preferment a man is capable of in this world.

David in these verses describes the wickedness of the wicked; whether he means his persecutors in particular, or all notorious gross sinners in general, is not certain. But we have here sin in its causes, and sin in its colours, in its root and in its branches.

1. Here is the root of bitterness from which all the wickedness of the wicked comes. It takes rise,

(1.) From their contempt of God, and the want of a due regard to him, *ver. 1. The transgression of the wicked* (as it is described afterwards, *ver. 3, 4.*) *faith within my heart*, i. e. makes me to conclude within myself, that there is no fear of God before his eyes, for if there were, he would not talk and act so extravagantly as he doth; he would not, he durst not break the laws of God, and violate his covenant with him, if he had any awe of his majesty, or dread of his wrath. Fitly therefore is it brought into the form of indictments by our law, that the criminal not having the fear of God before his eyes, did so and so. The wicked did not openly renounce the fear of God, but their transgression whispered it secretly into the minds of all those that knew any thing of the nature of piety and impiety; David concluding concerning those who lived at large, that they lived without God in the world.

(2.) From their conceit of themselves, and a cheat they wilfully put upon their own souls, *ver. 2. He flattereth himself in his own eyes*, i. e. while he goes on in sin, he thinks he doth wisely and well for himself, and either doth not see, or will not own the evil and danger of his wicked practices; he calls evil good, and good evil; his licentiousness he pretends to be but his just liberty; his fraud passed for his prudence and policy, and his persecuting the people of God, he suggests to himself is a piece of necessary justice. If his own conscience threaten him for what he doth, he saith, *God will not require it, I shall have peace though I go on.* Note, Sinners are self destroyers, by being self flatterers; Satan could not deceive them, if they did not deceive themselves. But will the cheat last always? No, the day is coming when the sinner will be undeceived, when his iniquity shall be found to be hateful. Iniquity is a hateful thing, it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which his pure and jealous eye cannot endure to look upon. It is hurtful to the sinner himself and therefore ought to be hateful; but it is not so, he rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel; because of the secular profit, and sensual pleasure which perhaps attends it; yet *the meat in his bowels will be turned, it will be the gall of asps*, *Job xx. 13, 14.* when their consciences are convinced, and sin appears in its true colours, and makes them a terror to themselves; when the cup of trembling is put into their hands, and they are made to drink the dregs of it, then their iniquity will be found hateful, and their self-flattery their unspeakable folly, and an aggravation of their condemnation.

2. Here are the cursed branches that spring from this root of bitterness. The sinner defies God, and even defies himself, and then what can be expected but that he should go all to nought; these two were the first inlets of sin. Men do not fear God, and therefore they flatter themselves, and then,

1. They make no conscience of what they say, true or false, right or wrong, *ver. 3. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit*; contrived to do wrong, and yet to cover it with specious and plausible pretences: it is no marvel if those that deceive themselves, contrive how to deceive all mankind; for who will they be true to, that are false to their own souls?

2. What little good there has been in them, is gone; the sparks of virtue extinguished, their convictions baffled, their good beginnings come to nothing, they have left off to be wise and to do good. They seemed to have been under the direction of wisdom, and the government of religion, but they have broken these bonds in sunder; they have shaken of their religion, and therewith their wisdom. Note, They that leave off to do good, leave off to be wise.

3. Having left off to do good, they contrive to do hurt, and to be vexations to those about them that are good, and do good, *ver. 4. He deviseth mischief upon his bed.* Note, 1. Omissions make way for commissions, when men leave off doing good, leave off praying, leave of their attendance on God's ordinances, and their duty to him, the devil easily makes them his agents, his instruments to draw those that will be drawn into sin, and those that will not, to draw them into trouble. Those that leave off to do good, begin to do evil; the devil being an apostate from his innocency, soon became a tempter to Eve, and a persecutor of righteous Abel. 2. It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it; to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits at work to contrive to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management; with the subtilty as well as the malice of the old serpent, to devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his word, *Micah ii. 1.* This argues the sinner's heart fully set in him to do evil.

4. Having entered into the way of sin, that way that is not good that neither has good in it, nor good at the end of it, they persist, and resolve to persevere in that way. He sets himself to execute the mischief he has devised, and nothing shall be withholden from him which he has purposed to do, though it be never so contrary both to his duty and his true interest. If sinners did not steel their hearts, and brazen their faces with obstinacy and impudence, they could not go on in their evil ways, in such a direct opposition to all that is just and good.

5. Doing evil themselves, they have no dislike at all of it, in others. He abhorreth not evil, but on the contrary takes pleasure in it, and is glad to see others as bad as himself. Or, this may speak his impunitency in sin: They that have done evil, if God give them repentance, abhor the evil they have done, and themselves because of it; it is bitter in the reflection, however sweet it was in the commission; but these hardened sinners have such seared stupified consciences, that they never reflect upon their sins afterwards with any regret or remorse, but stand to what they have done, as if they could justify it before God himself.

Some think David in this all particularly means Saul, who had cast off the fear of God, and left off all goodness; who pretended kindness to him, when he gave him his daughter to wife; but at the same time was devising mischief against him. But we are under no necessity of limiting ourselves so in the exposition of it; there are too many among us to whom the description agrees, which is to be greatly lamented.

5. Thy



5. Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. 6. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast. 7. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. 8. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. 9. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. 10. O continue thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart. 11. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me. 12. There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

David having looked round with grief upon the wickedness of the wicked, here looks up with comfort upon the goodness of God; a subject as delightful as the former was distasteful, and very proper to be set in the balance against it. Observe,

1. His meditations upon the grace of God. He sees the world polluted, himself endangered, and God dishonoured by the transgressions of the wicked, but of a sudden he turns his eye, and heart, and speech to God. *However it be, yet thou art good.* He here acknowledgeth,

(1.) The transcendent perfections of the divine nature: Among men we have often reason to complain, there is *no truth or mercy*, Hos. iv. 1. *no judgment nor justice*, Isa. v. 7. But all these may be found in God without the least alloy. Whatever is missing, or amiss, in the world, we are sure there is nothing missing, nothing amiss, in him that governs it.

(1.) He is a God of inexhaustible goodness. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.* If men shut up the bowels of their compassion, yet with God at the throne of his grace, we shall find mercy. When men are devising mischief against us, God's thoughts concerning us, if we cleave closely to him, are thoughts of good. On earth we meet with little content, but a great deal of disquiet and disappointment; but in the heavens, where the mercy of God reigns in perfection, and to eternity, there is all satisfaction; there therefore, if we would be easy, let us have our conversation, and there let us long to be. How bad soever the world is, let us never think the worst of God, or of his government; but from the abundance of wickedness that is among men, let us take occasion, instead of reflecting upon God's purity, as if he countenanced sin, to admire his patience, that he bears so much with those that so impudently provoke him; nay, and causeth his sun to shine, and his rain to fall upon them. If God's mercy were not in the heavens, i. e. infinitely above the mercies of any creature he would long ere this have drowned the world again. See Isa. lv. 8. 9. Hos. xi. 9.

(2.) He is a God of inviolable truth, *Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.* Though God suffers wicked people to do a great deal of mischief, yet he is, and will be, faithful to his threatenings against sin, and there will come a day when he will reckon with them: he is faithful also to his covenant with his people, which cannot be broken, not one jot or tittle of the promises of it defeated by all the malice of earth and hell. This is matter of great comfort to all good people, that though men are false, God is faithful; men speak vanity but the words of the Lord are pure words. God's faithfulness reacheth so high, that it doth not change with the weather, as men doth, for it reacheth to the skies, so it should be read, (as some think) above the clouds, and all the changes of the lower region.

(3.) He is a God of incontestible justice and equity. *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains*, so immovable and inflexible itself, and so conspicuous and evident to all the world; for no truth is more certain or more plain than this, that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and that he never did, nor ever will do, a y wrong to any of his creatures. Even when clouds and darkness are round about him, yet judgment and justice are the habitations of his throne, Psal. cxviii. 2.

(1.) He is a God of unsearchable wisdom and design. *Thy judgments are a great deep*, not to be fathomed with the line and plummet of any finite understanding; as his power is sovereign, which he owes not any account of to us, so his method is singular and mysterious, which cannot be accounted for by us. *His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters:* We know he doth all wisely and well, but what he doth we know not now, it is time enough to know hereafter.

(2.) The extensive care and beneficence of the divine providence. *Thou preservest man and beast*, not only protectest them from mischief, but suppliest them with that which is needful for the support of life. The beasts, though not capable of knowing and praising God, yet are graciously provided for; their eyes wait on him, and he giveth them their meat in due season. Let us not wonder that God gives food to bad men, for he feeds the brute creatures; and let us not fear but that he will provide well for good men; he that feeds the young lions will not starve his own children.

(3.) The peculiar favour of God to the saints. Observe, (1.) Their character, ver. 7. They are such as are allured by the excellency of God's loving kindness, to put their trust under the shadow of his wings. (1.) God's loving kindness is precious to them; they relish it, they taste a transcendent sweetness in it, they admire God's beauty and benignity above any thing in this world, nothing so amiable, so desirable. Those know not God that do not admire his loving kindness, and those know not themselves that do not earnestly covet it. (2.) They therefore repose an entire confidence in him; they have recourse to him, put themselves under his protection, and then think themselves safe, and find themselves easy, as the chickens under the wings of the hen, *Matth. xxiii. 37.* It was the character of profelytes, that they came to *trust under the wings of the God of Israel*, Ruth ii. 12. and what more proper to gather profelytes than the excellency of his loving kindness? What more powerful to engage our complacency to him and on him? Those that are thus drawn by love will cleave to him.

2. Their privilege; happy, thrice happy, the people whose God is the Lord, for in him they have, or may have, or shall have, a complete happiness.

1. Their desires shall be answered, ver. 8. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house*; their wants supplied, their cravings gratified, and their capacities filled; in God all-sufficient they shall have enough; all that which an enlightened, enlarged soul can desire or receive. The gains of the world and the delights of sense will avail, but never satisfy, *Isa. lv. 2.* But the communications of divine favour and grace will satisfy, but never surfeit. A gracious soul, though still desiring more of God, never desires more than God. The gifts of providence so far

satisfy them that are content with such things as they live; *I have all, and abound*, Phil. iv. 18. The benefit of holy ordinances, is the fatness of God's house, sweet to a sanctified soul, and strength-meat to the spiritual and divine life, with this they are abundantly satisfied; they desire nothing more in this world than to live a life of communion with God; and to have the comfort of the promises. But the full, the abundant satisfaction is reserved for the future state, the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. Every vessel will be full there.

2. There joys shall be constant. *Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.* There are pleasures that are truly divine: they are thy pleasures; not only which come from thee as the giver of them, but which terminate in thee as the matter and centre of them, which being purely spiritual, are of the same nature with those of the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, and bear some analogy, even to the delights of the eternal mind. There is a river of these pleasures, always full, always fresh, always flowing. There is enough for all, enough for each, see *Pfalm xvi. 4.* The pleasures of sense are stinking puddle water, those of faith are pure and pleasant, *clear as crystal*, Rev. xxii. 1. God has not only provided this river of pleasures for his people, but he makes them to drink of it: works in them a gracious appetite to these pleasures, and by his Spirit fills their souls with joy and peace in believing. In heaven they shall be for ever drinking of those pleasures that are at God's right hand, satiated with a fulness of joy, *Pfalm xvi. 11.*

3. Life and light shall be their everlasting bliss and portion, ver. 9. Having God himself for their felicity, (1.) In him they have a fountain of life, from which those rivers of pleasure flow, ver. 8. The God of nature is the fountain of natural life; in him we live and move, and have our being, the God of grace is the fountain of spiritual life: All the strength and comfort of a sanctified soul; all its gracious principles, powers and performances, are from God, all its sensations of divine things, and all its motions towards them, he is the spring and author of them all; he quickeneth whom he will, and whosoever will may come and take from him of the waters of life freely. He is the fountain of eternal life, the happiness of glorified saints consists in the vision and fruition of him, and in the immediate communications of his love without interruption or fear of cessation.

(2.) In him they have light in perfection, wisdom and knowledge and joy all included in this light. *In thy light we shall see light*, i. e. (1.) In the knowledge of thee in grace, and the vision of thee in glory; we shall have that which will abundantly suit and satisfy our understandings; that divine light which shines in the scripture, and especially in the face of Christ, the light of the world, has all truth in it. When we come to see God face to face, within the veil, we shall see light in perfection, we shall know enough then, *1 Cor. xiii. 12. 1 John iii. 2.* (2.) In communion with thee now; by the communications of thy grace to us, and the return of our devout affections to thee, and in the fruition of thee shortly in heaven, we shall have a complete felicity and satisfaction. In thy favour we have all the good we can desire. This is a dark world, we see little comfort in it, but in the heavenly light there is true light, and no false light; light that is lasting, and never waxes. In this world we see God, and enjoy him by creatures and means, but in heaven, *God himself shall be with us*, Rev. xxi. 3. and we shall see and enjoy him immediately.

2. We have here David's prayers, intercessions and holy triumphs, grounded upon these meditations.

1. He intercedes for all saints, begging that they may always experience the benefit and comfort of God's favour and grace, ver. 10. (1.) The persons he prays for, are those that know God, that are acquainted with him, acknowledge him, and avouch him for theirs; and the upright in heart that are sincere in their profession of religion, and faithful both to God and man: Those that are not upright with God, do not know him, as they should. (2.) The blessing he begs for them is God's loving kindness, i. e. the tokens of his favour towards them; and his righteousness, i. e. the workings of his grace in them; or his loving kindness and righteousness is his goodness, according to promise, it is mercy and truth. (3.) The manner in which he desires this blessing may be conveyed is, *O continue it, draw it out*, as the mother draws out her breasts to the child, and then the child draws out the milk from the breasts. Let it be drawn out to a length equal to the line of eternity itself: the happiness of the saints in heaven will be in perfection, and yet in continual progression, as some think; for the fountain there will be always full, and the streams always flowing. *In these is continuance*, Isa. lxiv. 5.

2. He prays for himself, that he might be preserved in his integrity and comfort, ver. 11. *Let not the foot of pride come against me*, to trip up my heels or trample upon me, and let not the hand of the wicked which is stretched out against me, prevail to remove me, either from my purity and integrity, by any temptation, or from my peace and comfort, by any trouble. Let not those that fight against God triumph over those who desire to cleave to him. They that have experienced the pleasure of communion with God, cannot but desire that nothing may ever remove them from him.

3. He rejoiceth in hope of the downfall of all his enemies in due time, ver. 12. There where they thought to have gained the point against me, they are themselves fallen; taken in that snare which they laid for me. There in the other world, (so some) there where the saints stand in the judgment, and have a place in God's house, the workers of iniquity are cast in the judgment, are cast down into hell, into the bottomless pit, out of which for certain they shall never be able to rise, from under the insupportable weight of God's wrath and curse. It is true we are not to rejoice, when any particular enemy of ours falls, but the final overthrow of all the workers of iniquity, will be the everlasting triumph of glorified saints.

## P S A L M XXXVII.

This psalm is a sermon, and an excellent useful sermon it is; calculated not (as most of the psalms) for our devotion, but for our conversation; there is nothing in it of prayer or praise, but it is all instruction; it is *Maschil*, a teaching psalm; it is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of providence, the advancement of the wicked, and the disgrace of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, and an exhortation to carry ourselves as becomes us, under such dark dispensations. The work of the prophets (and David was one) was to explain the law: Now the law of Moses had promised temporal blessings to the obedient, and denounced temporal miseries against the disobedient, which principally referred to the body of the people, the nation as a nation, for when they came to be applied to particular persons, many instances occurred of sinners in prosperity, and saints in adversity; to reconcile these instances with the word that God had spoken, is the scope of the prophet in this psalm. In which, (1.) He forbids us to fret at the prosperity of the wicked in their wicked ways, ver. 1-7, 8. (2.) He gives very good reasons why we should not



*fret at it.* (1.) *Because of the scandalous character of the wicked,* ver. 12—14—21—32. *notwithstanding their prosperity: and the honourable character of the righteous,* ver. 21—26—30, 31. (2.) *Because of the destruction and ruin which the wicked are nigh to,* ver. 2—9, 10—20—35, 36—38, *and the salvation and protection which the righteous are sure of, from all the malicious designs of the wicked,* ver. 13—15, 17—28—33—39—40. (3.) *Because of the particular mercy God has in store for all good people, and the favour he shews them,* ver. 11—16—18, 19—22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29—37. (3.) *He prescribes very good remedies against this sin of envying the prosperity of the wicked, and great encouragement to use those remedies,* ver. 3, 4, 5, 6—27—34. *In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish one another rightly to understand the providence of God, and to accommodate ourselves to it; at all times carefully to do our duty, and then patiently to leave the event with God, and to believe that how black soever things may look for the present, it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him.*

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **F**RET not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.
2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.
3. Trust in the LORD, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.
4. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
5. Commit thy way unto the LORD: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.
6. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.

The instructions here given are very plain, much need not be said for the explication of them, but there is a deal to be done for the reducing of them to practice, and there they will look best.

1. We are here cautioned against discontent at the prosperity and success of evil doers, ver. 1, 2. *Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious.* We may suppose, that David speaks this to himself first, and preaches it to his own heart, in his communing with that upon his bed, for the suppressing of those corrupt passions which he found working there, and then leaves it in writing, for instruction to others that might be in the like temptation. That is preached best, and with most probability of success to others, which is first preached to ourselves. Now, (1.) When we look abroad, we see the world full of evil doers and workers of iniquity, that flourish and prosper, that have what they will, and do what they will, that live in ease and pomp themselves, and have power in their hands to do mischief to those about them. So it was in David's time, and therefore it is so still, let us not marvel at the matter, as though it were some new or strange thing. (2.) When we look within, we find ourselves in temptation to fret at this, and to be envious against these scandals and burdens, these blemishes and common nuisances of this earth. We are apt to fret at God, as if he were unkind to the world, and unkind to his church, in permitting such men to live and prosper, and prevail as they do. We are apt to fret ourselves with vexation at their success in their evil projects; we are apt to envy them the liberty they take in getting wealth, and perhaps by unlawful means, and in the indulgence of their lusts, and to wish that we could shake off the restraints of conscience, and do so too. We are tempted to think them the only happy people, and to incline to imitate them, and to join ourselves with them, that we may share in their gains, and eat of their dainties. And this is what we are warned against: *Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious.* Fretfulness and envy are sins that are their own punishments, they are the uneasiness of the spirit and the rottenness of the bones, it is therefore in kindness to ourselves that we are warned against it. Yet that is not all, for, (3.) When we look forward with an eye of faith, we shall see no reason to envy wicked people their prosperity, for their ruin is at the door, and they are opening apace for it, ver. 2. They flourish but as the grass, and as the green herb, which no body envies or frets at. The flourishing of a godly man is like that of a fruitful tree, Psalm i. 3. but that of the wicked man like grass and herbs, which are very short-lived. (1.) They will soon wither of themselves. Outward prosperity is a fading thing, and so is the life itself to which it is confined. (2.) They will sooner be cut down by the judgments of God. Their triumphing is short, but their weeping and wailing will be everlasting.

2. We are here counselled to live a life of confidence and complacency in God, and that will keep us from fretting at the prosperity of evil doers; if we do well for our own souls, we shall see little reason to envy those that do ill for theirs.

Here are three excellent precepts which we are to be ruled by, and to enforce them, three precious promises, which we may rely upon.

1. We must make God our hope in the way of duty, and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in this world, ver. 3. (1.) It is required that we trust in the Lord, and do good, that we confide in God, and conform to him. The life of religion lies much in a believing reliance on God, his favour, his providence, his promise, his grace, and a diligent care to serve him and our generation, according to his will. We must not think to trust in God, and then live as we list: no, it is not trusting God, but tempting him, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him; nor must we think to do good, and then to trust to ourselves, and our own righteousness and strength; no, we must both trust in the Lord, and do good. And then, (2.) It is promised that we shall be well provided for in this world, *So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed*; he doth not say, so shalt thou get preferment, dwell in a palace, and be feasted, what needs that? a man's life consists not in the abundance of these things; but thou shalt have a place to live in, and that in the land in Canaan, the valley of vision, and thou shalt have food convenient for thee, and this is more than we deserve, it is as much as a good man will intend for, Gen. xxviii. 20. And it is enough for one that is going to heaven. Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance, *Verily thou shalt be fed*, some read it thou shalt be fed by faith, as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding upon the promises. *Verily thou shalt be fed*, as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee. God himself is a shepherd, a feeder to all those that trust in him, Psalm xxiii. 1.

2. We must make God our hearts delight, and then we shall have our hearts desire, ver. 4. we must not only depend upon God, but solace ourselves in him. We must be well pleased that there is a God, that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be, and that he is our God in covenant. We must delight ourselves in his beauty, bounty, and benignity, our souls must return to him, and repose in him as their rest, and their portion for ever. Being satisfied of his loving kindness, we must be satisfied with

it, and make that our exceeding joy, Psalm xliii. 4. We were commanded, ver. 3. to do good, and then follows this command, to delight in God, which is as much a privilege as duty. If we make conscience of obedience to God, we may then take the comfort of a complacency in him. And even this pleasant duty of delighting in God, has a promise annexed to it, which is very full and precious, enough to recompence the hardest services, *He shall give thee the desires of thy heart.* He has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body, and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul: what is the desire of the heart of the good man? It is this, to know and love, and live to God, to please him and to be pleased in him.

3. We must make God our guide, and submit in every thing to his conduct and dispose, and then all our affairs, even those that seem most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well, and to our satisfaction, ver. 5, 6.

(1.) The duty is very easy, and if we do it aright, it will make us easy. *Commit thy way unto the Lord; roll thy way upon the Lord*, to the margin reads it, *Prov. xvi. 3. Psalm lv. 22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, i. e. the burden of thy care*, 1 Pet. v. 7. We must roll it off ourselves, so as not to afflict and perplex ourselves with thoughts about future events, Matt. vi. 25, not to cumber and trouble ourselves either with contrivance of the means, or with expectation of the end, but refer it to God, leave it to him, by his wise and good providence to order and dispose of all our concerns as he pleaseth; *Reveal thy way unto the Lord*; (to the LXX) i. e. by prayer spread thy case, and all thy cares about it, before the Lord, as Jephthah uttered his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Judg. xi. 11. and then trust in him to bring it to a good issue, with a full satisfaction that all is well that God doth. We must do our duty, that must be our care, and then leave the event with God; *Sit still and see how the matter will fall*, Ruth iii. 18. We must follow providence, and not force it; subscribe to infinite wisdom, and not prescribe.

(2.) The promise is very sweet: (1.) In general, he shall bring that to pass, whatever it is which thou hast committed to him, if not to thy contrivance, yet to thy content. He will find means to extricate thee out of thy straits, to prevent thy fears; and bring about thy purposes to thy satisfaction. (2.) In particular he will take care of thy reputation, and bring thee out of thy difficulties, not only with comfort, but with credit and honour. *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment*, ver. 6. i. e. He shall make it to appear, thou art an honest man, and that is honour enough. (1.) It is implied that the righteousness and judgment of good people may for a time be clouded and eclipsed, either by remarkable rebukes of providence; Job's great afflictions darkened his righteousness; or, by the malicious censures and reproaches of men who put them under ill characters, which they no way deserve, and lay to their charge things which they know not. (2.) It is promised that God will in due time roll away the reproach they are under, clear up their innocence, and bring forth their righteousness to their honour; perhaps in this world, or furthest in the great day, Matt. xiii. 41. Note, If we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name.

7. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
8. Cease from anger and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.
9. For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.
10. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.
11. But the meek shall inherit the earth: and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
12. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
13. The LORD shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming.
14. The wicked have drawn out their sword, and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.
15. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.
16. A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.
17. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.
18. The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.
19. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
20. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of the lambs, they shall consume: into smoke shall they consume away.

In these verses we have,

1. The foregoing precepts inculcated; for we are so apt to disquiet ourselves with needless, fruitless, discontents and distrusts, that it is necessary there should be precept upon precept, and line upon line, to suppress them, and arm us against them.

(1.) Let us compose ourselves by believing in God, *rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him*, ver. 7. i. e. be well reconciled to all he doth, and acquiesce in it, for that is best that is, because it is what God has appointed: and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, though we know not how or which way. Be silent to the Lord, so the word is; not with a sullen, but a submissive silence. A patient bearing what is laid upon us, and a patient expectation of what is farther appointed for us, is as much our interest as it is our duty, for it will make us always easy, and there is a great deal of reason for it; for it is making a virtue of necessity.

(2.) Let us not discompose ourselves at what we see in this world. *Fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his wicked way*; that though he is an ill man, yet thrives, and grows rich and great in the world; no nor because of him who doth mischief with his power and wealth, and brings wicked devices to pass against those that are virtuous and good, who seems to have gained his point, and to have run them down; if thy heart begins to rise at it, stroke down thy folly, and cease from anger, ver. 8. check the first stirrings of discontent and envy, and do not harbour any hard thoughts of God and his providence upon this account; be not angry at any thing that God doth, but forsake that wrath; it is the worst kind of wrath that can be.

Fret



*Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil, i. e. do not envy them their prosperity, lest thou be tempted to fall in with them, and to take the same evil course that they take to enrich and advance themselves, or some desperate course to avoid them and their power. Note, a fretful, discontented spirit lies open to many temptations, and those that indulge it, are in danger of doing evil.*

2. The foregoing reasons taken from the approaching ruin of the wicked, notwithstanding their prosperity, and the real happiness of the righteous, notwithstanding their troubles, are here much enlarged upon, and the same things repeated in a pleasing variety of expression.

We were cautioned, *ver. 7.* not to envy the wicked, either worldly prosperity, or the success of their plots against the righteous. And the reasons here given respect these two temptations severally.

1. Good people have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of wicked people, or to grieve or be uneasy at it.

(1.) Because the prosperity of the wicked will soon be at an end, *ver. 9.* *Evil doers shall be cut off*, by some sudden stroke of divine justice, in the midst of their prosperity; what they have got by sin will not only flow away from them, *Job xx. 28.* but they shall be carried away with it. See the end of these men, *Psal. lxxiii. 17.* how dear their ill-got gain will cost them, and you will be far from envying them, or from being willing to espouse their lot, for better, for worse. Their ruin is sure, and it is very near, *ver. 10.* *Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be what they now are, they are brought into desolation in a moment*, *Psal. lxxiii. 19.* Have a little patience, for the Judge stands before the door, *Jam. v. 8, 9.* Moderate your passion, for the Lord is at hand, *Phil. iv. 5.* And when it comes it will be an utter ruin, he and his shall be extirpated, the day that comes, shall leave him neither root nor branch, *Mal. iv. 1.* thou shalt diligently consider his place, where but the other day he made a mighty figure, but it shall not be, you will not find it; he shall leave nothing valuable, nothing honourable, behind him. To the same purpose, *ver. 20.* *The wicked shall perish*, their death is their perdition, because it is the period of all their joy, and a passage to endless misery: *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*, but undone, for ever undone, are the dead that die in their sins. The wicked are the enemies of the Lord, so they make themselves, who will not have him to reign over them, and as such he will reckon with them; *they shall consume as the fat of lambs; they shall consume into smoke.* Their prosperity, which gratifies their sensuality, is like the fat of lambs, not solid or substantial, but loose and wasteful; and when their ruin comes, they shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God, and be consumed as the fat of the sacrifices was upon the altar, when it ascended in smoke. The day of God's vengeance on the wicked is represented as a *sacrifice of the fat of the kidneys of rams*, *Isa. xxxiv. 6.* for he will be honoured by the ruin of his enemies, as he was by the sacrifices; damned sinners are sacrifices, *Mark ix. 49.* This is a good reason why we should not envy them their prosperity, while they are fed to the full, they are but in fattening for the day of sacrifice, like a lamb in a large place, *Hos. iv. 16.* and the more they prosper the more will God be glorified in their ruin.

(2.) Because the condition of the righteous, even in this life, is every way better and more desirable than that of the wicked, *ver. 16.* In general a little that a righteous man has of the honour, wealth, and pleasure of this world, is better than the riches of many wicked. Observe, (1.) The wealth of the world is so dispensed by the divine providence, that it is often the lot of good people to have but a little of it, and of wicked people to have abundance of it; for thus God would shew us that the things of this world are not the best things, for if they were, those would have most that are best and dearest to God. (2.) That a godly man's little is really better than a wicked man's much, see *Prov. xv. 16, 17.*—*xvi. 8.*—*xxviii. 6.* A godly man's estate, though never so little, is better than a wicked man's estate, though never so much, for it comes from a better hand, from a hand of special love, and not merely from a hand of common providence; it is enjoyed by a better title. God gives it to them by promise, *Gal. iii. 18.* it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the heir of all things; and it is put to a better use, it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God; *unto the pure all things are pure*, *Tit. i. 15.* A little wherewith God is served and honoured, is better than a great deal prepared for Babel, or for a base lust.

The promises here made to the righteous secure them such a happiness as that they need not envy the prosperity of evil doers. Let them know to their comfort,

1. That they shall inherit the earth, i. e. as much of it as infinite wisdom sees good for them; they have the promises of the life that now is, *1 Tim. iv. 8.* If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it. All is theirs, even the world, and things present, as well as things to come; *1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.* They have it by inheritance, a safe and honourable title, not by permission only and connivance: when evil doers are cut off, the righteous sometimes inherit what they gather; the *wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, *Job xxvii. 17.* This promise is here made, (1.) To those that live a life of faith, *ver. 9.* *Those that wait upon the Lord*, as dependents on him, expectants from him, and supplicants to him, *they shall inherit the earth*, as a token of his present favour to them, and an earnest of better things intended for them in the other world. God is a good master that provides plentifully and well, not only for his working servants but for his waiting servants. (2.) To those that live a quiet and peaceable life, *ver. 11.* *The meek shall inherit the earth.* They are in least danger of being injured and disturbed in the possession of what they have; and they have most satisfaction in themselves, and consequently the sweetest relish of their creature-comforts. Our Saviour has made this a gospel promise, and a continuation of the blessing he pronounced on the meek, *Matt. v. 5.*

2. That they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace, *ver. 11.* Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in, but they have that which is better, abundance of peace, inward peace and tranquillity of mind, peace with God, and then peace in God, that great peace which they have that love God's law, whom *nothing shall offend*, *Psal. cxix. 165.* That abundance of peace which is in the kingdom of Christ, *Psal. lxxii. 7.* That peace which the world cannot give, *John xiv. 27.* and which the wicked cannot have, *Isa. lvii. 21.* This they shall delight themselves in, and in it they shall have a continual feast; while they that have abundance of wealth, do but cumber and perplex themselves with it, and have little delight in it.

3. That God knows their days, *ver. 18.* He takes particular notice of them, of all they do, and of all that happens to them. He keeps account of the days of their service, and not one day's work shall go unrewarded: and of the days of their suffering, that for those also they may receive a recompence. He knows their fair days and hath pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and as the day is, so shall the strength be.

4. That their inheritance shall be for ever. Their time on earth is reckoned by days, which will soon be numbered, God takes cognizance of them, and gives them the blessings of every day in its day, but it was never intended that their inheritance should be confined within the limits of those days, no, that must be the portion of an immortal soul, and therefore must

last as long as that lasts, and will run parallel with the longest line of eternity itself, *their inheritance shall be for ever*; not their inheritance in the earth, but that incorruptible, indefeasible one, which is laid up for them in heaven. They that are sure of an everlasting inheritance in the other world, have no reason to envy the wicked their transitory possessions and pleasures in this world.

5. That in the worst of times it shall go well with them, *ver. 19.* *They shall not be ashamed of their hope and confidence in God*, nor of the profession they have made of religion, for the comfort of that will stand them in stead, and be a real support to them in evil times. When others droop, they shall lift up their heads with joy and confidence; even in the days of famine, when others are dying for hunger round about them, they shall be satisfied, as *Elijah* was, some way or other God will provide food convenient for them, or give them hearts to be satisfied and content without it; so that if they should be hardly beasted and hungry, they shall not (as the wicked do) *fret themselves and curse their king and their God*, *Isa. viii. 21.* but rejoice in God as the God of their salvation, even when *the fig-trees do not blossom*, *Hab. iii. 17, 18.*

2. Good people have no reason to fret at the success of the designs of the wicked against the just in some measure and degree; suppose they do bring some of their wicked devices to pass, which makes us fear they will gain their point, and bring them all to pass, yet let us cease from anger, and not fret ourselves so as to think of giving up the cause. For,

1. Their plots will be their shame, *ver. 12, 13.* It is true, *the wicked plotteth against the just*, there is a rooted enmity in the seed of the wicked one against the righteous seed, their aim is, if they can, to destroy their righteousness, if that fail then to destroy them. To this end they have acted with a great deal both of curled policy and contrivance; they plot, they practise against the just; and of curled zeal and fury, *they gnash upon them with their teeth*, so desirous are they, if they could get it into their power, to eat them up; and so full of rage and indignation are they, because it is not in their power; but by all this they do but make themselves ridiculous; *the Lord shall laugh at them*, *Psal. ii. 4, 5.* They are proud and insolent, but God shall pour contempt upon them, he is not only displeased with them, but he despiseth them and all their attempts as vain and ineffectual, and their malice as impotent and in a chain; for he sees that his day is coming, that is, (1.) The day of God's reckoning, the day of the revelation of his righteousness, which now seems clouded and eclipsed. Men have their day now, *this is your hour*, *Isa. xlii. 5.* But God will have his day shortly, a day of recompences, a day which will fall to rights, and render that ridiculous which now passeth for glorious. *It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment*, *1 Cor. iv. 3.* God's day will give a decisive judgment. (2.) The day of their ruin, the wicked man's day, the day set for his fall, that day is coming; which notes obliquely, it is not yet come, but certainly it will come. The believing prospect of that day will enable the virgin, the daughter of Sion, to despise the rage of her enemies, and laugh them to scorn, *Isa. xxxvii. 21.*

2. Their attempts will be their destruction, *ver. 14, 15.* See here, (1.) How barbarous they are in their designs against good people. They prepare instruments of death, the sword and the bow, no less will serve; they hunt for the precious life; that which they design, is to cast down and slay; it is the blood of the saints they thirst after: they carry on the design very far, and it is near to be put in execution; they have drawn the sword and bent the bow; and all these military preparations are made against the helpless, the poor, and the needy, which speak then very cowardly; and against the guiltless, such as be of upright conversation, that never gave them any provocation, nor offered injury to them, or any other person, which speaks them very wicked: Uprightness itself will be no fence against their malice. But, (2.) How justly their malice recoils upon themselves, *their sword shall turn into their own hearts*; which implies the preservation of the righteous from their malice, and the filling up of the measure of their own iniquity by it. Sometimes that very thing prove to be their own destruction, which they projected against their harmless neighbours; however God's sword, which their provocations have drawn against themselves, will give them their death's wound.

3. Those that are not suddenly cut off, yet shall be so disabled to do any farther mischief, that the interest of the church shall be effectually secured. *Their bows shall be broken*, *ver. 15.* the instruments of their cruelty shall fail them, and they shall lose those whom they had made tools of to serve their bloody purposes with; nay, their arms shall be broken, so that they shall not be able to go on with their enterprises. But the Lord upholds the righteous, so that they neither sink under the weight of their affliction, nor are run down by the violence of their enemies. He upholds them both in their integrity, and in their prosperity; and they that are so upheld by the rock of ages, have no reason to envy the wicked the support of their broken reeds.

21. The wicked borroweth and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth. 22. For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. 23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. 24. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. 25. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. 26. He is ever merciful, and lendeth: and his seed is blessed. 27. Depart from evil, and do good: and dwell for evermore. 28. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints, they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. 29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. 30. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom; and his tongue talketh of judgment. 31. The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. 32. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. 33. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

These verses are much to the same purpose with the foregoing verses of this psalm, for it is a subject worthy to be dwelt upon. Observe here,

1. What is required of us, as the way to our happiness; which we may learn both from the characters here laid down, and the directions here given. If we would be blessed of God,

(1.) We must make conscience of giving every body their own, for the wicked



wicked borroweth, and payeth not again, ver. 21. It is the first thing which the Lord our God requires of us, that we do justly, and render to all their due. It is not only a shameful paltry thing, but a sinful wicked thing, not to repay what we have borrowed. Some make this an instance, not so much of the wickedness of the wicked, as of the misery and poverty to which they are reduced by the just judgment of God, that they shall be necessitated to borrow for their supply, and then be in no capacity to repay again, and so lie at the mercy of their creditors. And whatever some men seem to think of it, as it is a great sin for those that are able, to deny the payment of their just debts, so it is a great misery not to be able to pay them.

(2.) We must be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence; For as it is an instance of God's goodness to the righteous, that he puts it into the power of his hand to be kind, and to do good (and so some understand it, God's blessing increaseth his little to that degree, that he has abundance to spare for the relief of others) so it is an instance of the goodness of the righteous man, that he has a heart proportionable to his estate; he *sheweth mercy, and giveth*, ver. 21. He is ever merciful, or every day, or all the day merciful and lendeth, and sometimes there is as true charity in lending as in giving; and giving and lending are then acceptable to God, when they come from a merciful disposition in the heart, which if it be sincere, will be constant, and will keep us from being weary of well-doing: He that is truly merciful will be ever merciful.

(3.) We must leave our sins, and engage in the practice of serious godliness, ver. 27. *Depart from evil, and do good*; cease to do evil, and abhor it; learn to do well, and cleave to it. This is true religion.

(4.) We must abound in good discourse, and with our tongues must glorify God, and edify others. That is part of the character of a righteous man, ver. 30. *That his mouth speaketh wisdom*, not only he speaks wisely, but he speaks wisdom, like Solomon himself, for the instructions of those about him; his tongue talketh not of things idle and impertinent, but of judgment, i. e. of the word and providence of God, and the rules of wisdom for the right ordering of the conversation. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak that which is good, and to the use of edifying.

(5.) We must have our wills brought into an entire subjection to the will and word of God, ver. 31. *The law of God, of his God, is in his heart*; and in vain do we pretend that God is our God, if we do not receive his law into our hearts, and resign ourselves to the government of it. It is but a jest and a mockery to speak wisdom and to talk of judgment, ver. 30. unless we have the law in our hearts, and we think as we speak. The law of God must be a commanding, ruling principle in the heart; it must be a light there, a spring there, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform, none of his steps will slide; it will effectually prevent backsliding into sin, and the uneasiness that follows from it.

2. What is assured to us as instances of our happiness and comfort upon these conditions.

1. That we should have the blessing of God, and that blessing shall be the spring, and sweetness, and security of all our temporal comforts and enjoyments, ver. 22. *Such as be blessed of God*, as all the righteous are, with a father's blessing, by virtue of that shall inherit the earth, or the land, for so the same word is translated, ver. 29. the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands. Our creature comforts are then comforts indeed to us, when we see them flowing from the blessing of God, from his favour, his promise, and his covenant with us; and if we are sure of the blessing of God, we are sure not to want any thing that is good for us in this world. *The earth shall yield us her increase*, if God, as our own God, give us his blessing, Psalm lxxvii. 6. And as those whom God blessed, are thus blessed indeed, for they shall inherit the Land; so those whom he curseth, are cursed indeed, and they shall be cut off, and rooted out. And their extirpation by the divine curse will set off the establishment of the righteous by the divine blessing, and be a foil to it.

2. That God will direct and dispose of our actions and affairs so as may be most for his glory, ver. 23. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord*; by his grace and holy Spirit he directs the thoughts, affections, and designs of good men; he has all hearts in his hand, but theirs by their own consent; by his providence he over-rules the events that are concerning them, so as to make their way plain before them, both what they should do, and what they may expect. Observe, God orders the steps of a good man, not only his way in general by his written word, but his particular steps by the whispers of conscience, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*. He doth not always shew him his way at a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and so keeps him in a continual dependence upon his conduct. And this, (1.) Because he delighteth in his way, and is well-pleased with the paths of righteousness wherein he walks. *The Lord knows the way of the righteous*, Psalm i. 6. knows it with favour, and therefore directs it. (2.) That he may delight in his way. Because God orders his way according to his own will, therefore he delights in it; for as he loves his own image upon us, so he is well pleased with what we do under his conduct.

3. That God will keep us from being ruined by our falls, either into sin, or into trouble, ver. 24. *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down*. (1.) It is possible a good man may be overtaken in a fault, but the grace of God shall recover him to repentance, so that he shall not be utterly cast down. Though he may for a time lose the joys of God's salvation, yet they shall be restored to him; for God shall uphold him with his hand, uphold him with his free spirit. The root shall be kept alive, though the leaf wither, and there will come a spring after the winter. (2.) It is possible a good man may be in distress, his affairs embarrassed, his spirits sunk, but he shall not be utterly cast down; God will be the strength of his heart, when his flesh and heart fail, and will uphold him with his comforts, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

4. That we shall not want the necessary supports of this life, ver. 25. *I have been young, but now am old*, and of all the changes I have seen in men's outward condition, and the observations I have made upon them, I never saw the righteous forsaken of God and man, as I have sometimes seen wicked people abandoned both by heaven and earth; nor do I ever remember to have seen the seed of the righteous reduced to that extremity as to beg their bread. David had himself begged his bread of Abimelech the priest, but it was when Saul hunted him; and our Saviour has taught us to except the case of persecution for righteousness sake out of all the temporal promises, Mark x. 30. because that has such peculiar honours and comforts attending it, as make it rather a gift, (as the apostle reckons it, Phil. i. 29.) than a loss or grievance. But there are very few instances of good men or their families, that are reduced to such extreme poverty as many wicked people bring themselves to by their wickedness. He had not seen the righteous forsaken; nor his seed begging their bread forsaken; so some expound it. If they do want, God will raise them up friends to supply them, without a scandalous exposing of themselves to the reproach of common beggars; or if they go from door to door for bread, it shall not be with despair as the wicked man, that wanders abroad for bread, saying, where is it?

Job xv. 23. Nor shall he be denied as the prodigal, that would fain have filled his belly, but no man gave unto him, Luke xv. 16. Nor shall he grudge if he be not satisfied, as David's enemies when they wandered up and down for meat, Psalm lxx. 15. Some make this promise relate especially to those that are charitable and liberal to the poor, and to intimate that David never observed any that brought themselves to poverty by their charity, but it is with holding more than is meet that tendeth to poverty, Prov. xi. 24.

5. That God will not desert us, but graciously protect us in our difficulties and straits, ver. 28. *The Lord loveth judgment*, i. e. he delights in doing justice himself, and he delights in those that do justice, and therefore he forsaketh not his saints in affliction, when those make themselves strange to them, and become shy of them; but he takes care that they be preserved for ever, i. e. that the saints in every age be taken under his protection, that the succession be preserved to the end of time; and that particular saints be preserved from all the temptations, and through all the trials of this present time, to that happiness which shall be for ever. He will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, that is a preservation for ever, 2 Tim. iv. 18. Psalm xii. 7.

6. That we shall have a comfortable settlement in this world, and in a better, when we leave this. That we shall dwell for evermore, ver. 27. and not be cut off, as the seed of the wicked, ver. 28. That we shall inherit the land which the Lord our God gives us, and dwell therein for ever, ver. 29. They shall not be tossed that make God their rest, and are at home in him. But on this earth there is no dwelling for ever, no continuing city, it is in heaven only, that city which hath foundations, that the righteous shall dwell for ever: that will be their everlasting habitation.

7. That we shall not become a prey to our adversaries, that seek our ruin, ver. 32, 33. There is an adversary that takes all opportunities to do us a mischief, a wicked one that watcheth the righteous (as a roaring lion watcheth his prey) and seeketh to slay him; there are wicked men that do so, that are very subtle; they watch the righteous, that they may have an opportunity to do them a mischief effectually, and may have a pretence wherewith to justify themselves in the doing of it; and very spiteful, for they seek to slay him; but it may very well be applied to the wicked one, the devil, that old serpent, who has his wiles to entrap the righteous, his devices which we should not be ignorant of; that great red dragon, that seeks to slay them; that roaring lion, that goes about continually, restless and raging, and seeking whom he may devour. But it is here promised that he shall not prevail, neither Satan nor his instruments. (1.) He shall not prevail as a field adversary; *The Lord will not leave him in his hand*, he will not permit Satan to do what he would, nor will he withdraw his strength and grace from his people, but will enable them to resist and overcome him, and their faith shall not fail, Luke xxii. 31, 32. A good man may fall into the hands of a messenger of Satan, and be sorely buffeted, but God will not leave him in his hands, 1 Cor. x. 13. (2.) He shall not prevail as a law adversary; *God will not condemn him when he is judged*, though urged to do it by the accuser of the brethren, that accuseth them before our God day and night. His false accusations will be thrown out, as those exhibited against Joshua, Zeck. iii. 1, 2. *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. It is God that justifieth*, and then who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect.

34. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. 35. I have seen the wicked in great power: and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. 36. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. 37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. 38. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together, the end of the wicked shall be cut off. 39. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD, he is their strength in the time of trouble. 40. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them because they trust in him.

The psalmist's conclusion of this sermon (for that is the nature of this poem) is of the same purport with the whole, and inculcates the same things.

1. The duty here pressed upon us is still the same, ver. 34. *Wait on the Lord, and keep his way*, i. e. duty is ours, and we must mind it, and make conscience of it, keep God's way, and never turn out of it, nor loiter in it, keep close, keep going, but events are God's, and we must refer ourselves to him for the disposal of them; we must wait on the Lord, attend the motions of his providence, carefully observe them, and conscientiously accommodate ourselves to them. If we make conscience of keeping God's way, we may with cheerfulness wait on him, and commit to him our way: and we shall find him a good master both to his working servants and to his waiting servants.

2. The reasons to enforce this duty are much the same too, taken from the certain destruction of the wicked, and the certain salvation of the righteous. This good man being tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, that he might fortify himself against the temptation, goes into the sanctuary of God, and leads us thither, (Psalm lxxiii. 17.) there he understands their end, and thence gives us to understand it, and by comparing that with the end of the righteous, baffles the temptation and puts it to silence. Observe,

1. The misery of the wicked at last, however they may prosper awhile. *The end of the wicked shall be cut off*, ver. 38. And that cannot be well, that will undoubtedly end so ill. The wicked in their end will be cut off from all good, and all hopes of it, a final period will be put to all their joys, and they will be forever separated from the fountain of life to all evil. (1.) Some instances of the remarkable ruin of wicked people David had himself observed in this world; that the pomp and prosperity of sinners would not secure them from the judgments of God, when their day was come to fall, ver. 35, 36. *I have seen a wicked man* (the word is singular) suppose Saul, or Ahithophel (for David was an old man when he penned this psalm) in great power, formidable, so some render it) the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, carrying all before him with a high hand, and seeming to be firmly fixed and finely flourishing, spreading himself like a green bay-tree, which produceth all leaves and no fruit; like a native home-born Israelite, (so Dr. Hammond) likely to take root. But what became of him? Eliphaz long before had learned, when he saw the foolish taking root, to curse his habitation, Job v. 3. And David saw cause for it, for this bay-tree is withered away as soon as the fig-tree Christ cursed, he passed away as a dream, as a shadow, such was he, and all the pomp and power he was so proud of; he was gone in an instant, he was not, I sought him with wonder, but he could not be found. He had acted his part, and then quitted the



the stage, and there was no miss of him. (2.) The total and final ruin of sinners, of all sinners, will shortly be made as much a spectacle to the saints, as they are now sometimes made a spectacle to the world, *ver. 34. When the wicked are cut off* (and cut off they certainly will be) *thou shalt see it, with awful adorations of the divine justice. The transgressors shall be destroyed together*, *ver. 38.* In this world God singles out here one sinner, and there another, out of many, to be made an example in *terrorem*; but in the day of judgment, there will be a general destruction of all the transgressors, and not one shall escape. They that have sinned together, shall be damned together; *Bind them in bundles to burn them.*

3. The blessedness of the righteous at last. Let us see what will be the end of God's poor despised people.

1. Preferment. There have been times, the iniquity of which has been such, that men's piety has balked their preferment in this world, and put them quite out of the way of raising estates; but those that keep God's way, may be assured that in due time he will *exalt them to inherit the land*, *ver. 34.* he will advance them to a place in the heavenly mansions, to dignity and honour, and true wealth in the New Jerusalem; to inherit that good land, that land of promise, of which Canaan was a type; he will exalt them above all contempt and danger.

2. Peace, *ver. 37.* Let all people mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, take notice of him to admire him and imitate him, keep your eye upon him to observe what comes of him, and you will find that the end of that man is peace. Sometimes the latter end of his days proves more comfortable to him than the beginning was; the storms blow over, and he is comforted again after the time that he was afflicted; however, if all his days continue dark and cloudy, perhaps his dying day may prove comfortable to him, and his sun may set bright; or, if it should set under a cloud, yet his future state will be peace, everlasting peace. They that walk in their uprightness while they live, shall enter into peace when they die, *Isa. lvii. 2.* A peaceful death has concluded the troublesome life of many a good man; and all is well that thus ends everlastingly well. Balaam himself wished that his death and his last end might be like that of the righteous, *Numb. xxiii. 10.*

3. Salvation, *ver. 32—40.* The salvation of the righteous, (which may be applied to the great salvation of which the prophet enquired and searched diligently, *1 Pet. i. 10.*) that is of the Lord; it will be the Lord's doing; the eternal salvation, that salvation of God, which those shall see that order their conversation aright, *Psal. i. 23.* that is of the Lord too. And he that intends Christ and heaven for them, will be a God all sufficient to them. He is their strength in time of trouble, to support them under it, and carry them through it; *He shall help them and deliver them*, help them to do their duties, to bear their burdens, and to maintain their spiritual conflicts; help them to bear their troubles well, and get good by them, and in due time shall deliver them out of their troubles. He shall deliver them from the wicked that would run them down, and swallow them up; shall secure them there, where the wicked cease from troubling. He shall save them, not only keep them safe, but make them happy, because they trust in him; not because they have merited it from him, but because they have committed themselves to him, and reposed a confidence in him, and have thereby honoured him.

P S A L M XXXVIII.

This is one of the penitential psalms; it is full of grief and complaints from the beginning to the end: David's sins and his afflictions are the cause of his grief, and the matter of his complaints. It should seem he was now sick and in pain, which minded him of his sins, and helped to humble him for them; he was at the same time, deserted by his friends, and persecuted by his enemies; so that the psalm is calculated for the depth of distress, and a complication of calamities. He complains, (1.) Of God's displeasure, and of his own sin, which provoked God against him, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) Of his bodily sickness, *ver. 6—10.* (3.) Of the unkindness of his friends, *ver. 11.* (4.) Of injuries which his enemies did him, pleading his good carriage towards them, yet confessing his sins against God, *ver. 12—20.* Lastly, He concludes the psalm with earnest prayers to God, for his gracious presence and help, *ver. 21, 22.* In singing this psalm we ought to be much affected with the malignity of sin, and if we have not such troubles as are here described, we know not how soon we may have, and therefore must sing of them by way of preparation, and we know that others have them, and therefore we must sing of them by way of sympathy.

A PSALM OF DAVID to bring to remembrance.

1. **O** LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. 3. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. 4. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden that are too heavy for me. 5. My wounds stink and are corrupt: because of my foolishness. 6. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. 7. For my joints are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. 8. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. 9. LORD, all my desire is before thee: and my groaning is not hid from thee. 10. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. 11. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore: and my kinsmen stand afar off.

The title of this psalm is very observable. It is a psalm to bring to remembrance; the 70th psalm, which was likewise penned in a day of affliction, is so intitled. It is designed, (1.) To bring to his own remembrance; we will suppose it penned when he was sick and in pain, and then it teaches us that times of sickness are times to bring to remembrance; to our consciences to deal faithfully and plainly with us; to awaken order before us for our humiliation. In a day of adversity consider. Or we may suppose it penned after his recovery, but designed as a record of the

convictions he was under, and the workings of his heart when he was in affliction, that upon every review of this psalm he might call to mind the good impressions then made upon him, and make a fresh improvement of them. To the same purpose was the writing of Hezekiah, when he had been sick. (2.) To put others in mind of the same things which he was himself mindful of, and to teach them what to think, and what to say, when they are sick and in affliction; let them think as he did, and speak as he did.

1. He deprecates the wrath of God and his displeasure in his affliction, *ver. 1. O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath.* With this same petition he began another prayer, for the visitation of the sick, *Psal. vi. 1.* This was most upon his heart, and should be most upon ours when we are in affliction, that however God rebukes and chastens us, it may not be in wrath and displeasure, for that will be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery. Those that would escape the wrath of God, must pray against that more than any outward affliction; and be content to bear any outward affliction; while it comes from and consists with the law of God.

2. He bitterly laments the impressions of God's displeasure upon his soul, *ver. 2. Thine arrows stick fast in me.* Let Job's complaint, *chap. vi. 4.* expound David's here; by the arrows of the Almighty, he means the terrors of God, which did set themselves in array against him. He was under a very melancholy, frightful apprehension of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and thought he could look for nothing but judgment and fiery indignation to devour him. God's arrows, as they are sure to hit the mark, so they are sure to stick where they hit, to stick fast, till he is pleased to draw them out, and to bind up with his comforts the wound he has made with his terrors. This will be the everlasting misery of the damned, the arrows of God's wrath will stick fast in them, and the wound will be incurable. Thy hand, thy heavy hand, presseth me sore, and I am ready to sink under it: it not only lies hard upon me, but it lies long, and who knows the power of God's anger, the weight of his hand! Sometimes God shot his arrows, and stretched forth his hand for David, *Psal. xviii. 14.* but now against him; so uncertain is the continuance of divine comforts, where yet the continuance of divine grace is assured. He complains of God's wrath, as that which afflicted the bodily distemper he was under, *ver. 3. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger.* The bitterness of it infused in his mind affected his body; but that was not the worst, it caused the disquietness of his heart, by reason of which he forgot the courage of a soldier, the dignity of a prince, and all the cheerfulness of the heart of a good man, so much as the sense of God's anger which threw what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands. The way to keep the heart quiet, is to keep ourselves in the love of God, and to do nothing to offend him.

3. He acknowledgeth his sin to be the procuring, provoking cause of all his troubles, and groans more under the load of guilt than any other load, *ver. 3.* He complains his flesh had no soundness, his bones had no rest, so great a task he was in. It is because of thine anger, that kindles the fire which burns so fierce; but in the next words he justifies God herein, and takes all the blame upon himself, it is because of my sin. I have sinned, I have sinned, and so have brought it upon myself; my own iniquities do correct me. If our trouble be the fruit of God's anger, we may thank ourselves, it is our sin that is the cause of it. Are we restless? It is sin that makes us so: If there were not sin in our souls, there would be no pain in our bones, no illness in our bodies.

It is sin therefore that this good man complains most of, (1.) As a burden, a heavy burden, *ver. 4. Mine iniquities are gone over my head*, as proud waters over a man that is sinking and drowning, or as a heavy burden upon my head, pressing me down, more than I am able to bear or to bear up under. Note, Sin is a burden. The power of sin dwelling in us is a weight, *Heb. xii. 1.* all are clogged with it, it keeps men from soaring upwards and pressing forward; all the saints are complaining of it as a body of death they are loaded with; *Rom. vii. 23.* The guilt of sin committed by us is a burden, a heavy burden; it is a burden to God, he is pressed under it, *Amos ii. 13.* a burden to the whole creation which groans under it, *Rom. viii. 21, 22.* It will first or last be a burden to the sinner himself, either a burden of repentance, when he is pricked to the heart for it, labours and is heavy laden under it; or a burden of ruin, when it sinks him to the lowest hell, and will for ever detain him there; it will be a talent of lead upon him, *Eccl. x. 8.* Sinners are said to bear their iniquity. Threatenings are burdens.

(2.) As wounds, dangerous wounds, *ver. 5. My wounds stink and are corrupt*; as wounds in the body stink and fester, and grow foul for want of being dressed and looked after, and it is through my own foolishness. Sins are wounds, *Gen. iv. 23.* painful, mortal wounds: our wounds by sin are oftentimes in a bad condition, no care taken of them, no application made to them, and it is owing to the sinner's foolishness, in not confessing sin, *Psal. xxxii. 3, 4.* A slight sore neglected may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin, slighted and left unrepented of.

4. He laments himself because of his afflictions, and gives case to his grief, by giving vent to it, and pouring out his complaints before the Lord.

1. He was troubled in mind, his conscience was pained, and he had no rest in his own spirit; and a wounded spirit who can bear? He was troubled or distorted, bowed down greatly, and went mourning all the day long, *ver. 6.* He was always pensive and melancholy, which made him a burden and terror to himself. His spirit was feeble and sore broken, and his heart disquieted, *ver. 8.* Herein David in his sufferings was a type of Christ, who being in his agony, cried out; *my soul is exceeding sorrowful*: This is a sorer affliction than any other in this world; whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, we have no reason to complain, as long as he preserves to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences.

2. He was sick and weak in body; his joints filled with a loathsome disease, some swelling or ulcer or inflammation; some think a plague sore; such as Hezekiah's bile, and there was no soundness in his flesh, but, like Job, he was all over distempered. See, (1.) What vile bodies these are which we carry about with us; and what grievous diseases they are liable to; and what an offence and grievance they may soon be made by some diseases to the souls that animate them, as they always are a cloud, and clog. (2.) That the bodies both of the greatest and of the best of men, have in them the same seeds of diseases that the bodies of others have, and are liable to the same disasters. David himself, though to great a prince and so great a saint, was not exempt from the most grievous diseases; there was no soundness even in his flesh; probably this was after his sin in the matter of Uriah, and thus did he smart in his flesh for his fleshly lusts. When at any time we are distempered in our bodies, we ought to remember how broken, *ver. 8.* His heart panted and was in a continual palpitation, *ver. 10.* His strength and limbs failed him, as for the light of his eyes, that was gone from him, either with much weeping, or by a defluxion of rheum upon them, or through the lowliness of his spirits, and the frequent returns of a deliquium.



Note, Sickness will tame the strongest body and the stoutest spirit. David was famed for his courage and great exploits; and yet when God contended with him by bodily sickness, and the impressions of his wrath upon his mind, his hair is cut, his heart fails him, and he is become weak as water. Therefore let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor any man set grief at defiance; however it may be thought at a distance.

3. His friends were unkind to him, *ver. 11.* *My lovers* (such as had been merry with him in the day of his mirth) now *stand aloof from my sore*: they would not sympathize with him in his griefs, nor so much as come within hearing of his complaints; but, like the priest and Levite, *Luke x. 31. passed by on the other side.* Even his kinsmen, that were bound to him by blood and alliance, stood afar off. See what little reason we have to trust in man, or to wonder if we be disappointed in our expectations of kindness from men. Adversity tries friendship, and separates between the precious and the vile. It is our wisdom to make sure a friend in heaven, who will not stand aloof from our sore, and from whose love no tribulation or distress shall be able to separate us. David in his troubles was a type of Christ in his agony, Christ on his cross, feeble and sore broken, and then deserted by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off.

Lastly, In the midst of his complaints, he comforts himself with the cogitation God graciously took both of his griefs and of his prayers, *ver. 9.* *Lord, all my desire is before thee*; thou knowest what I want; and what I would have, *my groaning is not hid from thee.* Thou knowest the burthens I groan under, and the blessings I groan after. *The groanings which cannot be uttered,* are not hid from him that *searcheth the heart,* and *knows what is the mind of the spirit,* Rom. viii. 26, 27. In singing this, and praying it over, whatever burden lies upon our spirits, we should by faith cast it upon God, and all our care concerning it, and then be easy.

12. They also that seek after my life, lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt, speak mischievous things, and imagine deceit all the day long. 13. But I, as a deaf man, heard not: and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. 14. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. 15. For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear O LORD my God. 16. For I said, *Hear me,* lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. 17. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. 18. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. 19. But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. 20. They also that render evil for good, are mine adversaries: because I follow the thing that good is. 21. Forsake me not, O LORD, O my God, be not far from me. 22. Make haste to help me, O LORD, my salvation.

In these verses,

1. David complains of the power and malice of his enemies, who it should seem not only took occasion from the weakness of his body, and the trouble of his mind, to insult over him, but took advantage from thence to do him a mischief. He hath a great deal to say to say against them, which he humbly offers as a reason why God should appear for him, as *Psal. xxv. 19. Consider mine enemies.*

(1.) They are very spiteful and cruel; they seek my hurt: nay, they seek after my life, *ver. 12.* That life which was so precious in the sight of the Lord, and all good men, was aimed at, as if it had been forfeited or a public nuisance; such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman; it would wound the head, though it can but reach the heel. It is the blood of the saints that it thirsted after.

(2.) They are very subtle and politic; they lay snares, they imagine deceits, and herein they are restless and unwearied, they do it all the day long; they speak mischievous things one to another, *i. e.* Every one has something or other to propose, that may be a mischief to me. Mischief covered and carried on by deceit, may well be called a snare.

(3.) They are very insolent and abusive: *When my foot slippeth, i. e.* when I fall into any trouble, or when I make any mistake, misplace a word or take a false step, they magnify themselves against me; they are pleased with it, and promise themselves that it will ruin my interest, and that if I slip, I shall certainly fall and be undone.

(4.) They are not only unjust, but very ungrateful: they hate me wrongfully, *ver. 19.* I never did them any ill-turn, nor so much as bore them any ill-will, nor ever gave them any provocation; nay, they render evil for good, *ver. 20.* Many a kindness I have done them, for which I might have expected a return of kindness; but for my love they are my adversaries, *Psal. cix. 4.* Such a rooted enmity there is in the hearts of wicked men to goodness for its own sake, that they hate it, even then when they themselves have the benefit of it; they hate prayer, even in those that pray for them; and hate peace, even in those that would be at peace with them; but very ill-natured those are whom no courtesy will oblige, but they are rather exasperated by it.

(5.) They are very impious and devilish; they are my adversaries purely because I follow the thing that good is; they hated him not only for his kindness to them, but for his devotion and obedience to God; they hated him because they hated God, and all that bear his image. If we suffer ill for doing well, we must not think it strange; from the beginning it was so; Cain slew Abel, because his works were righteous; nor must we think it hard, because it will not be always so; for so much the greater will our reward be.

(6.) They are many and mighty; they are lively, they are strong, they are multiplied, *ver. 19.* *Lord, how they are increased that trouble me?* *Psal. xlii. 1.* Holy David was weak and faint, his heart panted, and his strength failed, he was melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and persecuted by his friends, but at the same time his wicked enemies were strong, and lively, and their number increased; let us not therefore pretend to judge of men's characters by their outward condition; none knows love or hatred by all that is before them. It should seem that David in this, as in other complaints he makes of his enemies, has an eye to Christ, whose persecutors were such as are here described, perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. None hate Christianity, but such as have first divested themselves of the first principles of humanity, and broken through its most sacred bonds.

2. He reflects with comfort upon his own peaceable and pious behaviour, under all the injuries and indignities that were done him. It is then only that our enemies do us a real mischief, when they provoke us to sin, (*Neh.*

*vi. 13.*) when they prevail to put us out of the possession of our own souls, and drive us from God and our duty; if by divine grace we are enabled to prevent this mischief, we quench their fiery darts, and save ourselves harmless; if still we hold fast our integrity and our peace, who can hurt us? This David did here.

(1.) He kept his temper, and was not ruffled or discomposed by any of the slights that were put upon him, or the mischievous things that were said or done against him, *ver. 13, 14.* *I as a deaf man heard not,* I took no notice of the affronts put upon me, did not resent them, nor was put into disorder by them, much less did I meditate revenge, or study to return the injury. Note, The less notice we take of the unkindness and injuries that are done us, the more we consult the quiet of our own minds. Being deaf he was dumb, as a man in whose mouth there are no reproofs; he was as silent as if he had nothing to say for himself, for fear of putting himself into a heat, and incensing his enemies yet more against him; he would not only not recriminate upon them, but not so much as vindicate himself, lest his necessary defence should be construed his offence. Though they fought after his life, and his silence might be taken for a confession of his guilt, yet he was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Note, When our enemies are most clamorous, ordinarily it is our prudence to be silent, or to say little, lest we make ill worse. David could not hope by his mildness to win upon his enemies, or by his soft answers to turn away their wrath, for they were men of such base spirits, that they rendered him evil for good; and yet he carried it thus meekly towards them, that he might prevent his own sin, and might have the comfort of it in the reflection. Herein David was a type of Christ, who was as a sheep dumb before the shearer, and when he was reviled, reviled not again; and both are examples to us not to render railing for railing.

(2.) He kept close to his God by faith and prayer, and so both supported himself under these injuries, and silenced his own resentments of them. (1.) He trusted in God, *ver. 15.* *I was as a man that openeth not his mouth,* for in thee, O Lord, do I hope. I depend upon thee to plead my cause, and clear my innocency, and some way or other to put them to silence and shame. His lovers and friends, that should have owned him and stood by him, and appeared as witnesses for him, withdrew from him, *ver. 10.* But God is a friend that will never fail us, if we hope in him; *I was as a man that heareth not, for thou wilt hear*; What need I hear and God hear too? as *1 Pet. v. 7.* *He careth for you,* and what need you care and God care too? *Thou wilt answer,* so some, and therefore I will say nothing. Note, It is a good reason why we should bear reproach and calumny with silence and patience, because God is a witness to all the wrong that is done us, and in due time will be a witness for us, and against those that do us wrong; therefore let us be silent, because if we be, then we may expect that God will appear for us, for that is an evidence we trust in him; but if we undertake to manage for ourselves, we take God's work out of his hands, and forfeit the benefit of his appearing for us. Our Lord Jesus therefore when he suffered, threatened not, because he committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, *1 Pet. ii. 23.* and we shall lose nothing at last by doing so. *Thou shalt answer Lord, for me.* (2.) He called upon God, *ver. 16.* *For I said hear me,* that is supplied; *I said so*; as *ver. 15.* in thee do I hope, for thou wilt hear, lest they rejoice over me; I comforted myself with that, when I was apprehensive that they would run me down. It is a great support to us when men are false and unkind, that we have a God to go to whom we may be free with, and who will be faithful to us.

3. He here bewails his own follies and infirmities. (1.) He was very sensible of the present workings of corruption in him, and that he was now ready to repine at the providence of God, and to be put into a passion by the injuries men did him; *I am ready to halt,* *ver. 17.* This will best be explained by a reflection like this which the psalmist made upon himself in a like case, *Psal. lxxiii. 2.* *My feet were almost gone, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked*; so here, *I was ready to halt,* ready to say, *I have cleansed my hands in vain.* His sorrow was continual, *All the day long have I been plagued,* *Psal. lxxiii. 13, 14.* and it was continually before him, he could not forbear poring upon it, and that made him almost ready to halt between religion and irreligion. The fear of this drove him to his God; in thee do I hope, not only that thou wilt plead my cause, but that thou wilt prevent my falling into sin. Good men, by setting their sorrow continually before them, have been ready to halt, who by setting God always before them, have kept their standing.

(2.) He remembered against himself his former transgressions, acknowledging that by them he had brought these troubles upon himself, and forfeited the divine protection, though before men he could justify himself, before God he will judge and condemn himself, *ver. 18.* *I will declare mine iniquity,* and not cover it. *I will be sorry for my sin,* and not make a light matter of it; and this helped to make him silent under the rebukes of providence, and the reproaches of men. Note, If we be truly penitent for sin, that will make us patient under affliction, and particularly under unjust censures. Two things are required in repentance, (1.) Confession of sin; *I will declare mine iniquity*; I will not only in general own myself a sinner, but I will make a particular acknowledgment of what I have done amiss; we must declare our sins before God freely and fully, and with their aggravating circumstances, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves. (2.) Contrition for sin: *I will be sorry for it,* sin will have sorrow; every true penitent grieves for the dishonour he has done to God, and the wrong he has done to himself; I will be in care or fear about my sin, so some; in fear lest it ruin me, and in care to get it pardoned.

4. He concludes with very earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence with him, and seasonable powerful succour in his distress, *ver. 21, 22.* *Forsake me not, O Lord,* though my friends forsake me, and though I deserve to be forsaken by thee: Be not far from me, as my unbelieving heart is ready to fear thou art. Nothing goes nearer to the heart of a good man in affliction, than to be under the apprehension of God's deserting him in wrath; nor doth anything therefore come more feelingly from his heart than this prayer, *Lord, be not thou far from me: make haste for my help*; for I am ready to perish, and in danger of being lost, if relief do not come quickly. God gives us leave, not only to call upon him when we are in trouble but to hasten him. He pleads, thou art my God, whom I serve, and on whom I depend to bear me out; and my salvation, who alone art able to save me, who hast engaged thyself by promise to save me, and from whom alone I expect salvation. Is any afflicted let him thus pray, let him thus plead, let him thus hope in singing this psalm.

P S A L M XXXIX.

David seems to have been at a great loss, when he penned this psalm, and upon some account or other very uneasy: for it is with some difficulty that he conquers his passion, and composeth his spirit himself to take that good counsel which he had given to others, *Psal. xxvii. to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, without fretting*; for it is easier to give the good advice, than to give the good example of quietness under affliction. What was the particular trouble which gave occasion for



for the conflict David was now in, doth not appear. Perhaps, it was the death of some dear friend or relation that was the trial of his patience, and that suggested to him these meditations of mortality; and at the same time too himself was weak and ill, and under some prevailing distemper. His enemies likewise were seeking advantages against him, and watched for his halting that they might have something to reproach him for; thus aggrieved, (1.) He relates the struggle that was in his breast between grace and corruption, between passion and patience, ver. 1--3. (2.) He meditates upon the doctrine of man's frailty and mortality, and prays to God to instruct him in it, ver. 4--6. (3.) He applies himself to God for the pardon of his sins, the removal of his afflictions, and the lengthening out of his life, till he was ready for death, ver. 7--13. This is a funeral psalm, and very proper for the occasion: in singing of it we should get our hearts duly affected with the brevity, uncertainty, and calamitous state of human life, and those on whose comforts God has by death made breaches, will find this psalm of great use to them, in order to their obtaining what we ought much to aim at under such an affliction, which is, to get it sanctified to us for our spiritual benefit, and to get our hearts reconciled to the holy will of God in it.

¶ To the chief musician, even to Jeduthun.

¶ A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. I SAID I will take heed to my way, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. 2. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good, and my sorrow was stirred. 3. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue. 4. LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. 5. Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breath, and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. 6. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew, surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches and knoweth not who shall gather them.

David here recollects, and leaves upon record, the workings of his heart under his afflictions, and it is good for us to do so, that what was thought amiss might be amended, and what was well thought of may be improved the next time.

1. He remembered the covenants he had made with God to walk circumspectly, and to be very cautious both of what he did, and what he said. When at any time we are tempted to sin, and are in danger of falling into it, we must call to mind the solemn vows we have made against sin, against that particular sin we are upon the brink of. God can and will mind us of them, *Jer. ii. 20. Thou saidst, I will not transgress*, and therefore we ought to mind ourselves of them. So David did here, (1.) He remembers that he had resolved in general, to be very cautious and circumspect in his walking, ver. 1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways*; and it was well said, and what he would never unfay, and therefore must never gain say. Note, (1.) It is the great concern of every one of us to take heed to our ways, that is, to walk circumspectly, while others walk at all adventures. (2.) We ought stedfastly to resolve, that we will take heed to our ways, and frequently to renew that resolution: fast bind, fast find. (3.) Having resolved to take heed to our ways, we must upon all occasions mind ourselves of that resolution, for it is a covenant never to be forgotten, but which we must be always mindful of.

(2.) He remembers that he had in particular covenanted against tongue-sins. That he would not sin with his tongue, that he would not speak amiss, either to offend God, or offend the generation of the righteous, *Psal. lxxiii. 15. It is not so easy as we could wish, not to sin in thought*: but if an evil thought should arise in his mind, he would lay his hand upon his mouth, and suppress it, that it should go no further; and this is so great an attainment, that if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man: and so needful a one, that he who seems to be religious, but bristles not his tongue, his religion is vain. David had resolved, (1.) That he would at all times watch against tongue-sins. I will keep a bridle or muzzle upon my mouth; a bridle upon it, as upon an unruly horse, to guide and direct it, to check and curb it, to keep it in the right way, and on a good pace, see *Jam. iii. 3. Watchfulness in the habit, is the bridle upon the head*; watchfulness in the act and exercise, is the hand upon the bridle, a muzzle upon it, as upon an unruly dog that is fierce and doth mischief; by particular steadfast resolution, corruption is restrained from breaking out at the lips, and so is muzzled. (2.) That he would double his guard against them, when there was most danger of scandal, *when the wicked is before me*. When he was in company with the wicked, he would take heed of saying any thing that might harden them, or give occasion to them to blaspheme. If good men light into bad company, they must take heed what they say. Or, *when the wicked is before me*, i. e. in my thoughts. When he was contemplating the pride and power, the prosperity and flourishing estate of evil doers, he was tempted to speak amiss, and therefore then he would take special care what he said. Note, The stronger the temptation to a sin is, the stronger the resolution must be against it.

2. Pursuant to these covenants, he made a shift, with much ado, to bridle his tongue, ver. 2. *I was dumb with silence, I held my peace even from good*. His silence was commendable; and the greater the provocation was, the more praise-worthy was his silence. Watchfulness and resolution in the strength of God's grace, will do more towards the bridling of the tongue than we can imagine, though it be an unruly evil. But what shall we say of his keeping silence even from good? Was it his wisdom that he refrained good discourse when the wicked were before him, because he would not cast pearls before swine? I rather think it was his weakness; because he might not say any thing, he would say nothing, but ran into an extreme, which was a reproach to the law, for that prescribes a mean between extremes. The same law which forbids all corrupt communication, requires that which is good, and to the use of edifying, *Eph. iv. 29.*

3. The less he spoke, the more he thought, and the more warmly. Binding the distemper part did but draw the humour to it, *my sorrow was stirred, my heart was hot within me*, ver. 3. He could bridle his tongue, but he could not keep his passion under, though he suppressed the smoke, that was as a fire in his bones, and while he was musing upon his afflictions

and upon the prosperity of the wicked, the fire burned. Note, Those that are of a frowful discontented spirit, ought not to pore much, for while they suffer their thoughts to dwell upon the causes of the calamity, the fire of their discontent is fed with fuel, and burns the more furiously. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is musing, and its ill effects upon ourselves, and that is no less than burning. If therefore we would prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must address the grievance of ungoverned thoughts.

4. When he did speak at last, it was to the purpose. *At the last I spake with my tongue*; and some make what he said to be the breach of his good purpose, and that in what he said, he sinned with his tongue, and so they make what follows to be a passionate wish, *that he might die like Elijah*, 1 Kings xix. 3. and *Job, chap. vi. 8.* But I rather take it to be not the breach of his good purpose, but the reformation of his mistake in carrying it too far; he had kept silence from good, but now he would keep silence no longer. He had nothing to say to the wicked that were before him, for to them he knew not how to place his words, but, after long musing, the first word he said was a prayer, and a devout meditation upon a subject, which it will be good for us all to think much of.

1. He prays to God to make him sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death, ver. 4. *Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days*. He doth not mean, Lord, let me know how long I shall live, and when I shall die; we could not in faith pray such a prayer, for God has no where promised to let us know, but has in wisdom locked up that knowledge among the secret things which belong not to us, nor would it be good for us to know it; but *Lord, make me to know my end*, is, Lord, give me wisdom and grace to consider it, (*Deut. xxxii. 29.*) and to improve what I know concerning it, *the living know that they shall die*, *Eccl. ix. 5.* but few care for thinking of it; we have therefore need to pray, that God by his grace would conquer that aversion, which is in our corrupt hearts, to the thoughts of death. Lord, make me to consider, (1.) What death is; it is my end, the end of my life, and all the employments and enjoyments of life; it is the end of all men, *Eccl. vii. 2.* It is a final period to our state of probation and preparation, and an awful entrance upon a state of recompence and retribution. To the wicked man, it is the end of all his joys; to a godly man, it is the end of all his griefs. Lord, give me to know my end, i. e. to be better acquainted with death, and to make it more familiar to me, *Job xvii. 14.* and to be more affected with the greatness of the change. Lord, give me to consider what a serious thing it is to die. (2.) How near it is; Lord, give me to consider the measure of my days, that they are measured in the counsel of God, the end is a fixed end, so the word signifies, *my days are determined*, *Job xiv. 5.* And that the measure is but short; my days will soon be numbered and finished. When we look upon death as a thing at a distance, we are tempted to adjourn the necessary preparations for it; but when we consider how short life is, we shall see ourselves concerned to do what our hands find to do, not only with all our might, but with all possible expedition. (3.) That it is continually working in us. Lord, give me to consider how frail I am, how scanty the stock of life is, and how fainty the spirits, which are as the oil to keep that lamp burning. We find by daily experience, that the earthly house of this tabernacle is mouldering and going to decay, Lord, make us to consider this, that we may secure mansions in the house not made with hands.

2. He meditates upon the brevity and vanity of life, pleading it with God for relief under the burdens of life, as Job often, and pleading it with himself for his quickening to the business of life.

1. Man's life on earth is short and of no continuance, and that is a reason why we should sit loose to it, and prepare for the end of it, ver. 5. *Behold thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth*, the breadth of four fingers, a certain dimension, a small one; and the measure whereof we have always about us, always before our eyes; we need no rod, no pole, no measuring line, wherewith to take the dimensions of our days, nor any skill in arithmetic wherewith to compute the number of them; no, we have the standard of them at our fingers end, and there is no multiplication of it, it is but one hand-breadth in all. Our time is short, and God has made it so; for the number of our months is with him: It is short, and he knows it to be so; it is as nothing before thee. He remembers how short our time is, *Psal. lxxxix. 47.* It is nothing in comparison with thee; so some. All time is nothing to God's eternity, much less our share of time.

2. Man's life on earth is vain and of no value, and therefore it is folly to be fond of it, and wisdom to make sure of a better life. Adam is able, man is vanity in his present state; is not what he seems to be, has not what he promiseth himself, he and all his comforts lie at a continual uncertainty, and if there were not another life after this, all things considered, he were made in vain. He is vanity, i. e. he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe how emphatically this truth is expressed here. (1.) Every man is vanity, without exception, high and low, rich and poor, all meet in this. (2.) He is so at his best estate, when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, and the height of prosperity; when he is most easy and merry and secure, and thinks his mountain stands strong. (3.) He is altogether vanity, as vain as you can imagine. All man is vanity, so it may be read; every thing about him is uncertain, nothing is substantial and durable but what relates to the new man. (4.) Verily he is so. This is a truth of undoubted certainty, but which we are very unwilling to believe, and need to have solemnly attested to us, as it is indeed by frequent instances. (5.) Selah is annexed, as a note commanding observation. Stop here, and pause a while, that you may take time to consider and apply this truth, that every man is vanity. We ourselves are so.

Now for the proof of the vanity of man, as mortal, he here instances, in three things, and shews the vanity of each of them, ver. 6. (1.) The vanity of our joys and honours, surely every man walketh (even when he walks in state, when he walks in pleasure) in a shadow, in an image, in a vain shew. When he makes a figure, his fashion puffeth away, and his great pomp is but great fancy, *Acts xxv. 23.* It is but a shew, and therefore a vain shew, like the rainbow, the gaudy colours of which must needs vanish and disappear quickly, when the substratum is but a cloud, a vapour; such is life, *Jam. iv. 14.* and therefore such are all the gaieties of it. (2.) The vanity of our griefs and fears: *Surely they are disquieted in vain*. Our disquietments are often groundless; we vex ourselves without any just cause and the occasions of our trouble are many times the creatures of our own fancy and imagination, and they are always fruitless; we disquiet ourselves in vain, for we cannot with all our disquietment alter the nature of things, nor the counsel of God: things will be as they are, when we have disquieted ourselves never so much about them. (3.) The vanity of our cares and toils. He takes a great deal of pains to heap up riches, and they are but like heaps of muck in the furrows of the field, good for nothing unless they be spread. But when he has filled his treasures with this trash, he knows not who shall gather them, nor to whom they shall descend when he is gone; for he shall not take them away with him. He asks not, *for whom do I labour*; and that it is folly, *Eccl. iv. 8.* But if he did ask, he could not tell whether he should be a wise man or a fool, a friend or a foe, *Eccl. ix. 19. This is vanity*.

7. And



7. And now, LORD, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. 8. Deliver me from all my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish. 9. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth: because thou didst it. 10. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. 11. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah. 12. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry, hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. 13. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

The psalmist having meditated on the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the vanity and vexation of spirit that attends all the comforts of life, here in these verses turns his eyes and heart heaven-ward; where there is no solid satisfaction to be had in the creature, it is to be found in God, and in communion with him; and to him we should be driven by our disappointments in the world. David here speaks,

1. His dependence on God, ver. 7. Seeing all is vanity, and man himself is so, (1.) He despairs of a happiness in the things of the world, and disclaims all expectations from it. Note, *Lord, what wait I for?* even nothing from the things of sense and time; I have nothing to wish for, nothing to hope for from this earth. Note, The consideration of the vanity and frailty of human life should deaden our desires to the things of this world, and lower our expectations from it. If the world be such a thing as this, God deliver me from having or seeking my portion in it. We cannot count upon constant health and prosperity, nor upon comfort in every relation, for it is all as uncertain as our continuance here. Now though I have sometimes foolishly promised myself this and the other from the world, now I am of another mind. (2.) He takes hold of happiness and satisfaction in God: *my hope is in thee.* Note, When creature confidences fail, it is our comfort that we have a God to go to, a God to trust to, and we should thereby be quickened to take so much the satter hold of him by faith.

2. His submission to God, and his cheerful acquiescence in his holy will, ver. 9. If our hope be in God for a happiness in the other world, we may well afford to reconcile ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence concerning us in this world. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth,* in a way of complaint and murmuring: he now again recovered that serenity and quietness of mind which was disturbed, ver. 2. Whatever comforts he is deprived of, whatever crosses he is burdened with, he will be easy: because thou didst it. It did not come to pass by chance, but according to thine appointment. We may here see, (1.) A good God doing all, and ordering all events concerning us. Of every event we may say, this is the finger of God, it is the Lord's doing, whoever were the instruments. (2.) A good man for that reason saying nothing against it: He is dumb, he has nothing to object, no question to ask, no dispute to raise upon it: All that God doth is well done.

3. His desire towards God, and the prayers he puts up to him; *Is any afflicted? let him pray,* as David here,

1. For the pardoning of his sin, and the preventing of his shame, ver. 8. Before he prays, (ver. 10.) *Remove thy stroke from me;* he prays, ver. 8. *Deliver me from all mine offences,* from the guilt I have contracted, the punishment I have deserved, and the power of corruption I have been captivated by. When God forgives our sins, he delivers us from them, he delivers us from them all. He pleads, *make me not a reproach to the foolish.* Wicked people are foolish people; and then they shew their folly most, when they think to shew their wit, by scoffing at God's people. When David prays that God would pardon his sins, and not make him a reproach, it is to be taken as a prayer for peace of conscience; Lord, leave me not to the power of melancholy, which the foolish will laugh at me for. And as a prayer for grace, that God would never leave him to himself, so far as to do any thing that might make him a reproach to bad men. Note, This is a good reason why we should both watch and pray against sin, because the credit of our profession is nearly concerned in the preservation of our integrity.

2. For the removal of his affliction, that he might speedily be eased of his present burdens, ver. 10. *Remove away thy stroke from me.* Note, When we are under the correcting hand of God, our eye must be to God himself, and not to any other for their relief; he only that inflicts the stroke can remove it. And we may then in faith, and with satisfaction, pray that our afflictions may be removed, when our sins are pardoned, *Ipsa.* xxxviii. 17. and when as here, the affliction is sanctified, and has done its work, and we are humbled under the hand of God.

1. He pleads the great extremity he was reduced to by his affliction, which made him the proper object of God's compassion. *I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.* His sickness prevailed to that degree that his spirit failed; his strength was wasted, and his body emaciated. The blow or conflict of thine hand has brought me even to the gates of death. Note, The strongest, and boldest, and best of men cannot bear up under much less make head against the power of God's wrath. It was not his case only, but any man will find himself an unequal match for the Almighty, ver. 11. When God doth at any time contend with us, when with rebukes he corrects us, (1.) We cannot impeach the equity of his controversy, but must acknowledge that he is righteous in it; for whenever he correcteth man it is for iniquity: Our ways and our doings procure the trouble to ourselves, and we are beaten with a rod of our own making. It is the yoke of our transgressions, though it be *bound with his hand,* Lam. i. 14. (2.) We cannot oppose the effects of his controversy, but he will be too hard for us. As we have nothing to move in arrest of his judgment, so we have no way of escaping the execution. God's rebukes makes men's beauties to consume away like a moth, we see it often, we feel it sometimes, how much the body is weakened and decayed by sickness in a little time: the countenance is changed; where is the ruddy cheek and lip, the sprightly eye, the lively look, the smiling face? It is the reverse of all this. What a poor thing is beauty? and what fools are they that are proud of it, or in love with it, when it will certainly, and may quickly be consumed thus? Some make the moth to represent man, who is as easily crushed as a moth with the touch of a finger, *Job* iv. 19. Others make it to represent the divine rebukes, which silently and insensibly waste and consume us, as the moth doth the garment. All which abundantly proves what he had said before, that surely every man is vanity, weak and helpless, so he will be found when God comes to contend with him.

(2.) He pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. He hoped the end was accomplished for which it was sent, and that there-

fore it would be removed in mercy, and unless an affliction hath done its work, though it may be removed, it is not removed in mercy. (1.) It had set him a weeping, and he hoped God would take notice of that, when the Lord God called to mourning he answered the call, and accommodated himself to the dispensation, and therefore could in faith pray, *Lord, hold not thy peace at my tears,* ver. 12. He that doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, much less his own children, will not hold his peace at their tears, but will either speak deliverance for them, (and if he speak it is done) or the mean time speak comfort to them, and make them to hear joy and gladness. (2.) It had set him a praying: and afflictions are sent to stir up prayer. If they had that effect, and when we are afflicted we pray more, and pray better than before, we may hope that God will hear our prayer, and give ear to our cry; for the prayer which by his providence he gives occasion for, and which by his spirit of grace he indites, shall not return void. (3.) It had helped to wean him from the world, and to take his affections off from it; now he began more than ever to look upon himself as a stranger and sojourner here, like all his fathers, not at home in this world, but travelling through it to another, to a better, and would never reckon himself at home till he came to heaven. He pleads it with God: Lord, take cognizance of me, and of my wants and burdens, for I am a stranger here, and therefore meet with strange usage; I am slighted and oppressed as a stranger, and whence should I expect relief but from thee, from that other country to which I belong?

Lastly, He prays for a reprieve yet a little longer, ver. 13. *O spare me,* ease me, raise me up from this illness, that I may recover strength both in body and mind, that I may get into a more calm and composed frame of spirit, and may be better prepared for another world, before I go hence by death, and shall be no more in this world. Some make this to be a passionate wish, that God would send him help quickly, or it would be too late, like that, *Job* x. 20, 21. But I rather take it as a pious prayer, that God would continue him here till by his grace he had made him fit to go hence, and that he might finish the work of life before his life was finished. *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.*

## P S A L M XL.

It should seem David penned this psalm upon occasion of his deliverance, by the power and goodness of God, from some great and pressing trouble, by which he was in danger of being overwhelmed; probably it was some trouble of mind, arising from a sense of sin, and of God's displeasure against him for it; whatever it was, the same spirit that indited his praises for that deliverance, was in him at the same time a spirit of prophecy, testifying of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; or ere he was aware, he was led to speak of Christ's undertaking, and the discharge of his undertaking, in words that must be applied to Christ only; and therefore how far the praises that here go before that illustrious prophecy, and the prayers that follow, may safely and profitably be applied to him, it will be worth while to consider in this psalm. (1.) David records God's favour to him, in delivering him out of his deep distress, with thankfulness to his praise, ver. 1-5. (2.) Thence he takes occasion to speak of the work of our redemption by Christ, ver. 6-10. (3.) That gives him encouragement to pray to God for mercy and grace, both for himself and for his friends, ver. 11-17. If in singing this psalm we mix faith with the prophecy of Christ, and join in sincerity with the praises and prayers here offered up, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

¶ To the chief musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. I WAITED patiently for the LORD, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. 2. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 3. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. 4. Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. 5. Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

In these verses, we have,

1. The great distress and trouble that the psalmist was in. This is supposed, ver. 2. that he was plunged into a horrible pit, and into miry clay; out of which he could not work himself, and in which he found himself sinking yet further. He saith nothing here either of the sickness of his body, or the insults of his enemies, and therefore we have reason to think it was some inward disquiet and perplexity of spirit that was now his greatest grievance. Despondency of spirit under the sense of God's withdrawals, and prevailing doubts and fears about the eternal state, are indeed a horrible pit and miry clay, and have been so to many a dear child of God.

2. His humble attendance upon God, and his believing expectations from him in those depths. *I waited patiently for the Lord,* ver. 1. *Waiting I waited.* He expected relief from no other but from God, the same hand that rears must heal, that smites must bind up (*Ezra* vi. 1.) or it will never be done. From God he expected relief, and he was big with the expectation, not doubting but it would come in due time. There is power enough in God to help the weakest, and grace enough in God to help the unworthiest of all his people that trust in him. But he waited patiently; which intimates that the relief did not come quickly; yet he doubted not but it would come, and resolved to continue believing, and hoping, and praying, till it did come. Those whose expectation is from God, may wait with assurance, but must wait with patience. Now this is very applicable to Christ. His agony both in the garden, and on the cross, was the same continued, and it was a horrible pit and miry clay. Then was the soul troubled and exceeding sorrowful: but then he prayed, *Father, glorify thy name, Father, save me;* then he kept hold of his relation to his Father, my God, my God, and thus waited patiently for him.

3. His comfortable experience of God's goodness to him in his distress, which



which he records for the honour of God and his own and others encouragement.

(1.) God answered his prayers, *He inclined unto me and heard my cry*. Those that wait patiently for God, though they may wait long, do not wait in vain. Our Lord Jesus was heard in that he feared, Heb. v. 7. Nay, he was sure the Father heard him always.

(2.) He silenced his fears, and filled the tumults of his spirits, and gave him a settled peace of conscience, *ver. 2*. He brought me out of that horrible pit of despondency and despair, scattered the clouds, and shone bright upon my soul, with the assurances of his favour, and not only so, but *set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings*. Those that have been under the prevalency of a religious melancholy, and by the grace of God have been relieved, may apply this very feelingly to themselves, they are brought up out of a horrible pit, and (1.) The mercy is completed by the setting of their feet upon a rock, where they find firm footing, are as much elevated with the hopes of heaven, as they were before cast down with the fears of hell. Christ is the rock on which a poor soul may stand fast, and on whose mediation alone between us and God we can build any solid hopes or satisfaction. (2.) It is continued in the establishment of their goings. Where God has given a steadfast hope, he expects there should be a steady, regular conversation, and if that be the blessed fruit of it, we have reason to acknowledge with abundance of thankfulness the riches and power of his grace.

(3.) He filled him with joy, as well as peace in believing. *He hath put a new song in my mouth, i. e.* He has given me cause to rejoice, and a heart to rejoice; he was brought as it were into a new world, and that filled his mouth with a new song, even praise to our God, for to his praise and glory must all our songs be sung. Fresh mercies, especially such as we never yet received, call for new songs. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus in his reception to paradise, his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the joy and glory set before him, he was brought out of the horrible pit, set upon a rock, and had a new song put in his mouth.

4. The good improvement that should be made of this instance of God's goodness to David.

1. David's experience would be an encouragement to many to hope in God, and for that end he leaves them here upon record. *Many shall see and fear, and trust in the Lord*. They shall fear the Lord and his justice, which brought David, and the Son of David into that horrible pit; and shall say, if this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry! they shall fear the Lord and his goodness, in filling the mouth of David, and the Son of David, with new songs of joy and praise. There is a holy, reverent fear of God, which is not only consistent with, but the foundation of our hope in him. They shall not fear him and shun him, but fear him and trust in him in their greatest straits, not doubting but to find him as able and ready to help them, as David did in his distress. God's dealings with our Lord Jesus as our great encouragement to trust in God; when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief for our sins, he demanded our debt from him, and when he raised from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, he made it to appear that he had accepted the payment he made, and was satisfied with it; and what greater encouragement can we have to fear and worship God, and to trust in him? See Rom. iv. 25 — v. 1, 2.

The psalmist invites others to make God their hope, as he did, by pronouncing those happy that do so, *ver. 4*. *Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and him only*; that has great and good thoughts of him, and is entirely devoted to him, and respecteth not the proud; doth not do as they do that trust in themselves, nor depend upon those who proudly encourage others to trust in them, for both the one and the other turn aside to lies, as indeed all those do that turn aside from God. This is applicable, particularly, to our faith in Christ: Blessed are they that trust in him, and in his righteousness alone, and respect not the proud Pharisees, that set up their own righteousness in competition with that, that will not be governed by their dictates, nor turn aside to lies with the unbelieving Jews, who submit not to the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3. Blessed are they that escape this temptation.

2. The joyful sense he had of his mercy, led him to observe with thankfulness the many other favours he had received from God, *ver. 5*. When God puts new songs into our mouth, we must not forget our former songs, but repeat them; *Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done*, both for me and others; this is but one of many; many are the benefits with which we are daily loaded, both by the providence, and by the grace of God. (1.) They are his works: Not only the gifts of his bounty, but the operations of his power; he works for us, he works in us, and thus he favours us with matter not only for thanks, but for praise. (2.) They are his wonderful works; the contrivance of them admirable, his condescension to us, in bestowing them upon us, admirable; eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. (3.) His wonderful works are all the product of his thoughts to us-ward. He doth all according to the counsel of his own will, Eph. i. 11: the purposes of his grace which he purposed in himself, Eph. iii. 11. They are the projects of infinite wisdom, the designs of everlasting love, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Jer. xxxi. 3. *Thoughts of good and not of evil*, Jer. xxix. 11. His gifts and callings will therefore be without repentance, because they are not sudden resolves, but the result of his thoughts, his many thoughts, to us-ward. (4.) They are innumerable: they cannot be methodised or reckoned up in order; there is an order in all God's works, but they are so many that present themselves to our view at once, that we know not where to begin, nor which to name next; the order of them, and their natural references and dependences, and how the links of the golden chain are joined, is a mystery to us, and what we shall not be able to account for, till the veil be rent, and the mystery of God finished. Nor can they be counted, nor the very heads of them; when we have said the most we can of the wonders of divine love to us, we must conclude with an *et cetera*, and adore the depth, despairing to find the bottom.

6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required: 7. Then said I, Lo, I come in the volume of the book it is written of me: 8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. 9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. 10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness, and thy truth from the great congregation.

VOL. II. No. LXXXIII.

The psalmist being struck with amazement at the wonderful works that God had done for his people, is strangely carried out here to foretell that work of wonder which excelleth all the rest, and is the foundation and fountain of all, that of our redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. God's thoughts which were to us-ward concerning that work, were the most curious, the most copious, the most gracious, and therefore above any other to be most admired. This paragraph is quoted by the apostle, Heb. x. 5. &c. and applied to Christ, and his undertaking for us. As in the institutions, so in the devotions of the Old Testament, there is more of Christ, than perhaps, the Old Testament saints were aware of; and when the apostle would shew us the Redeemer's voluntary undertaking of his work, he doth not fetch his account out of the book of God's sacred counsels, which belong not to us, but from the things revealed. Observe,

1. The utter insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to atone for sin, in order to our peace with God and our happiness in him; *Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire*, i. e. thou wouldst not have the Redeemer to offer them; something he must have to offer but not those, Heb. viii. 3. therefore he must not be of the house of Aaron, Heb. vii. 14. Or, in the days of the Messiah, burnt-offering and sin-offering will be no longer required, but all those ceremonial institutions will be abolished. But that is not all, even while the law concerning them was in full force, it might be said, God did not desire them, nor accept them for their own sake; they could not take away the guilt of sin by satisfying God's justice; the life of a sheep, which is so much inferior in value to that of a man, (Matt. xii. 12.) could not pretend to be an equivalent, much less an expedient, to preserve the honour of God's government and laws, and repair the injury done to that honour by the sin of man. They could not take away the terror of sin by pacifying the conscience, nor the power of sin by sanctifying the nature, it was impossible, Heb. ix. 9.—x. 1, 2, 3, 4. What there was in them that was valuable, resulted from their reference to Jesus Christ, of whom they were types; shadows indeed, but shadows of good things to come, and trials of the faith and obedience of God's people: of their obedience to the law, and their faith in the gospel. But the substance must come, which is Christ, who must bring that glory to God, and that grace to man which it was impossible those sacrifices should ever do.

2. The designation of our Lord Jesus to the work and office of mediator: *Mine ears hast thou opened*, i. e. God the Father disposed him to the undertaking, Isa. l. 5, 6. and then obliged him to go through with it. Mine ear hast thou digged. It is supposed to allude to the law and custom of binding servants to serve for ever, by boring their ear to the door post, see Exod. xxi. 6. Our Lord Jesus was so in love with his undertaking, that he would not go out free from it, and therefore engaged to persevere for ever in it; and for this reason he is able to save us to the uttermost, because he has engaged to serve his Father to the uttermost, who upholds him in it; Isa. xlii. 1.

3. His own voluntary consent to this undertaking: *Then said I, Lo, I come*. Then, when sacrifice and offering would not do rather than the work should be undone, I said, Lo, I come, to enter the lists with the powers of darkness, and to advance the interests of God's glory and kingdom. This speaks three things; (1.) That he freely offered himself to this service, which he was under no engagement at all to, prior to his own voluntary acceptance. It was no sooner proposed to him, but with the greatest cheerfulness he consented to it, and was wonderfully well pleased with the undertaking; had he not been perfectly voluntary in it, he could not have been a sacrifice; for it is by this will (this *animus offerentis*) that we are sanctified, Heb. x. 10. (2.) That he firmly obliged himself to it. I come, i. e. I promise to come in the fulness of time. And therefore the apostle saith, it was when he came into the world that he had an actual regard to this promise; by which he had engaged his heart to approach unto God. He thus entered into bonds not only to show the greatness of his love, but because he was to have the honour of his undertaking before he had fully performed it. Though the price was not paid, it was secured to be paid, so that he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (3.) That he frankly owned himself engaged. He said, Lo, I come, said it all along to the Old Testament saints, who therefore knew him by the title of *ἐρχόμενος*, *He that should come*. This word was the foundation on which they built their faith and hope, and which they looked and longed for the accomplishment of.

4. The reason why he came in pursuance of his undertaking: because *in the volume of the book it was written of him*. (1.) In the close rolls of the divine decree and counsel: There it was written that his ear was opened, and he said, Lo, I come. There the covenant of redemption was recorded, the counsel of peace between the Father and the Son; and to that he had an eye in all he did, the commandment he received of his Father. (2.) In the letters patent of the Old Testament, Moses and all the prophets testified of him, in all the volumes of that book something or other was written of him, which he had an eye to, that all might be accomplished, John xix. 28.

5. The pleasure he took in his undertaking: Having freely offered himself to it, he did not fail, nor was discouraged, but proceeded with all possible satisfaction to himself, *ver. 8, 9*. *I delight to do thy will, O my God*: It was to Christ his meat and drink to go on with the work appointed to him, John iv. 34. and the reason here given is, *thy law is within my heart*; It is written there, it rules there, it is an active commanding principle there. It is meant of the law, concerning the work and office of the mediator, what he was to do and suffer; this law was dear to him, and had an influence upon him in his whole undertaking. Note, When the law of God is written in our hearts, our duty will be our delight.

6. The publication of the gospel to the children of men, even in the great congregation, *ver. 9, 10*. The same that as a priest wrought our redemption for us, as a prophet by his own preaching first, then by his apostles, and still by his word and Spirit makes it known to us. The great salvation began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3. It is the gospel of Christ that is preached to all nations. Observe, (1.) What it is that is preached: It is righteousness, *ver. 9*. God's righteousness, *ver. 10*. the everlasting righteousness which Christ has brought in, Dan. ix. 24. compare Rom. i. 16, 17. It is God's faithfulness to his promise, and the salvation which had been looked for. It is God's loving-kindness and his truth, his mercy according to his word. Note, In the work of our redemption, we ought to take notice how bright all the divine attributes shine, and give to God the praise of each of them. (2.) To whom it is preached; to the great congregation, *ver. 9*. and again, *ver. 10*. When Christ was here on earth, he preached to multitudes, thousands at a time. The gospel was preached both to Jews and Gentiles, to the great congregations of both; solemn and religious assemblies are a divine institution, and in them the glory of God, in the face of Christ, ought to be both praised to the glory of God, and preached for the edification of men. (3.) How it is preached; freely and openly; *I have not refrained my lips, I have not hid it, I have not concealed it*. This intimates, that whoever undertook to preach the gospel of Christ, would be in great temptation to hide it, and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of a great opposition: but Christ himself, and



those whom he calls to this work, let their faces as a *flint*, Isa. i. 7. and were wonderfully carried on in it. And it is well for us that they were so, for by this means our eyes came to see this joyful light, and our ears to hear this joyful sound; which otherwise we might for ever have perished in ignorance of.

11. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy loving kindness, and thy truth continually preserve me. 12. For innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me. 13. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me. 14. Let them be ashamed and confounded together, that seek after my soul to destroy it: let them be driven backward, and put to shame that wish me evil. 15. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame, that say unto me, Aha, aha. 16. Let all those that seek thee, rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. 17. But I am poor and needy, yet the LORD thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer, make no tarrying, O my God.

The psalmist having meditated upon the work of redemption, and spoken of it in the person of the Messiah, now comes to make improvement of the doctrine of his mediation between us and God, and therefore speaks in his own person. Christ having done his Father's will, and finished his work, and given orders for the preaching of the gospel to every creature, we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, for mercy and grace.

1. This may encourage us to pray for the mercy of God, and to put ourselves under the protection of that mercy, ver. 11. Lord, thou hast not spared thy Son, nor withheld him, withhold not thou thy tender mercies then, which thou hast laid up for us in him; for wilt thou not with him also freely give us all things? Rom. viii. 32. Let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve me. The best saints are in continual danger, and see themselves undone, if they be not continually preserved by the grace of God; and the everlasting loving-kindness and truth of God is that which we have to depend upon for our preservation to the heavenly kingdom, Psalm lxi. 7.

2. This may encourage us in reference to the guilt of sin, that Jesus Christ has done that towards our discharge from it, which sacrifice and offering could not do. See here, (1.) The frightful sight he had of sin, ver. 12. This was it that made the discovery he was now favoured with of a Redeemer very welcome to him. He saw his iniquities to be evils, the worst of evils; he saw that they compassed him about, in all the reviews of his life, and his reflections upon each step of it, still he discovered something amiss. The threatening consequences of his sin surrounded him; look which way he would, he saw some mischief or other waiting for him, which he was conscious to himself his sins had deserved. He saw them taking hold of him, arresting him, as the bailiff doth the poor debtor; he saw them to be innumerable, and more than the hairs of his head; convinced, awakened consciences, are apprehensive of danger from the numberless number of the sins of infirmity which seem small as hairs, but being numerous, are very dangerous! Who can understand his errors, God numbers our hairs, Matt. x. 30. which yet we cannot number, so he keeps an account of our sins, which we keep no account of. The sight of sin so oppressed him, that he could not hold up his head. I am not able to look up, much less could he keep up his heart, therefore my heart faileth me. Note, The sight of our sins in their own colours, would drive us to distraction, if we had not at the same time some sight of a Saviour. (2.) The careful recourse he had to God under the sense of sin, ver. 13. seeing himself brought by his sins to the very brink of ruin, eternal ruin, with what a holy passion does he cry out, Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me, ver. 13. O save me from the wrath to come, and the present terrors I am in through the apprehensions of that wrath; I am undone, I die, I perish, without speedy relief. In a case of this nature, where the bliss of an immortal soul is concerned, delays are dangerous, therefore, O Lord make haste to help me.

3. This may encourage us to hope for victory over our spiritual enemies that seek after our souls to destroy them, ver. 14. the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour; if Christ has triumphed over them, we through him shall be more than conquerors. In the belief of this we may pray with humble boldness, Let them be ashamed and confounded together, and driven backward, ver. 14. Let them be desolate, ver. 15. Both the conversion of a sinner, and the glorification of a saint, are great disappointments to Satan who doth his utmost, with all his power and subtilty, to hinder both; now our Lord Jesus having undertaken to bring about the salvation of all his chosen, we may in faith pray, that both these ways that great adversary may be confounded. When a child of God is brought into that horrible pit, and the miry clay, Satan cries, Aha, aha, thinking he has gained his point, but he shall rage when he sees the brand plucked out of the fire, and shall be desolate for a reward of his shame. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. The accuser of the brethren is cast out.

4. This may encourage all that seek God, and love his salvation, to rejoice in him, and to praise him, ver. 16. See here, (1.) The character of good people, conformable to the laws of natural religion, they seek God, desire his favour, and in all their exigencies apply themselves to him, as a people should seek unto their God: And conformable to the laws of revealed religion, they love his salvation, that great salvation, of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, which the Redeemer undertook to work out, when he said, Lo, I come. All that shall be saved love the salvation, not only as a salvation from hell, but a salvation from sin. (2.) The happiness secured to good people by this prophetic prayer; They that seek God shall rejoice and be glad in him, and with good reason, for he will not only be found of them, but will be their bountiful rewarder. They that love his salvation shall be filled with the joy of his salvation, and shall say continually, The Lord be magnified, and thus they shall have a heaven upon earth; blessed are they that are thus still praising God.

Lastly, This may encourage the saints in distress and affliction to trust in God, and comfort themselves in him, ver. 17. David himself was one of these, I am poor and needy, a king, perhaps now on the throne, and yet without a Saviour; in want and distress, yet the Lord thinketh upon me, in and through the mediator; by whom we are made accepted. Men forget the poor and needy, and seldom think of them, but God's thoughts toward them which he had spoken of, ver. 3. are their support and comfort. They

may assure themselves that God is their help under their troubles, and will be in due time their deliverer out of their troubles, and will make no long tarrying: for the vision is for an appointed time, and therefore though it tarry, we may wait for it, for it shall come; it will come, it will not tarry.

## P S A L M XLI.

God's kindness and truth have often been the support and comfort of the saints, when they have had most experience of men's unkindness and treachery: David here found them so upon a sick bed, when he found his enemies very barbarous, but his God very gracious. (1.) He here comforts himself in his communion with God under his sickness, by faith receiving and laying hold of God's promises to him, ver. 1, 2, 3, and lifting up his heart in prayer to God, ver. 4. (2.) He here represents the malice of his enemies against him, their malicious censures of him, their spiteful reflections upon him, and their insolent carriage towards him, ver. 5—9. (3.) He leaves his case with God, not doubting but that he would own and favour him, ver. 10, 11. and so the psalm concludes with a doxology, ver. 13. Is any afflicted with sickness? let him sing the beginning of this psalm. Is any persecuted by enemies? let him sing the latter end of it; and we may any of us in singing of it, meditate upon both the calamities and comforts of good people in this world.

¶ To the chief musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **BLESSED** is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. 2. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. 3. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. 4. I said, LORD, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.

In these verses we have,

1. God's promises of succour and comfort to those that consider the poor; and we may suppose that David makes mention of these with application, either, (1.) To his friends, who were kind to him, and very considerate of his case, now he was in affliction; *Blessed is he that considers poor David*: here and there he met with one that sympathized with him, and was concerned for him, and kept up their good opinion of him and respect for him, notwithstanding his afflictions, while his enemies were so insolent and abusive to him; on these he pronounced this blessing, not doubting but that God would recompense to them all the kindness they had done him, particularly, when they also came to be in affliction: the provocations which his enemies gave him, did but endear his friends so much the more to him; (2.) To himself; he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had considered the poor; that when he was in honour and power at court, he had taken cognizance of the wants and miseries of the poor, and had provided for their relief, and therefore was sure God would, according to his promise, strengthen and comfort him in his sickness. Here is a comment upon that promise; *Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy*. Observe,

(1.) What the mercy is which is required of us: it is to consider the poor or afflicted, whether in mind, body, or estate: these we are to consider with prudence and tenderness; we must take notice of their affliction, and enquire into their state; we must sympathize with them, and judge charitably concerning them; we must wisely consider the poor; i. e. we must ourselves be instructed by the poverty and affliction of others; it must be *Maschil* to us, that is the word here used.

(2.) What the mercy is that is promised to us, if we thus shew mercy; he that considers the poor, (if he cannot relieve them yet he considers them, and has a compassionate concern for them, and in relieving them, doth it considerately and with discretion) God will be sure to consider him: he shall not only be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, but he shall be blessed upon the earth; this branch of godliness, as much as any other, has the promise of the life that now is, and is ordinarily recompensed with temporal blessings. Liberality to the poor is the surest and swiftest way of thriving, for we may be sure of seasonable and effectual relief from God.

(1.) In all troubles. *He will deliver them in the day of evil*, so that when the times are at the worst it shall go well with them, and they shall not fall into the calamities in which others are involved: if any be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, they shall. They who thus distinguished themselves from those that have hard hearts, God will distinguish from those that have hard usage: are they in danger? he will preserve and keep them alive; and to those who have a thousand times forfeited their lives, as the best have, it must be acknowledged a great favour if they have their lives given them for a prey: he doth not say, they shall be preferred, but they shall be preserved and kept alive, when the arrows of death fly thick round about them. Do their enemies threaten them? God will not deliver them into the will of their enemies, and the most potent enemy we have can have no power against us, but what is given him from above. The good-will of a God that loves us is sufficient to secure us from the ill-will of all that hate us, men or devils; and that good will we may promise ourselves an interest in, if we have considered the poor, and helped to relieve and rescue them.

(2.) Particularly in sickness, ver. 3. *The Lord will strengthen him both in body and mind upon the bed of languishing*, on which he had long lain sick, and he will make all his bed; a very condescending expression, alluding to the care of those that nurse and tend sick people, especially of mothers for their children when they are sick, which is to make their beds easy for them, and that bed must needs be well made, which God himself has the making of; he will make all his bed from head to foot, so that no part shall be uneasy; he will turn his bed (so the word is) to shake it up, and make it very easy; or, he will turn it into a bed of health. Note, God hath promised his people that he will strengthen them and make them easy under their bodily pains and sicknesses: He has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing; nor that their sickness shall not be unto death; but he has promised to enable them to bear their affliction with patience, and cheerfully to wait the issue; the soul shall by his grace be made to dwell at ease, when the body lies in pain.

2. David's prayer directed and encouraged by these promises, ver. 4. *I said, heal my soul*; it is good for us to keep some account of our prayers, that we may not unfay in our practices any thing that we said in our prayers. Here is, (1.) His humble petition; *LORD, be merciful unto me*; he appeals to mercy as one that knew he could not stand the test of strict justice. The best saints, even those that have been merciful to the poor have not made God



God their debtor; but must throw themselves on his mercy; when we are under the rod we must thus recommend ourselves to the tender mercy of our God; Lord, heal my soul; sin is the sickness of the soul, pardoning mercy heals it, renewing grace heals it; and this spiritual healing we should be more earnest for than for bodily health. (2.) His penitent confession; *I have sinned against thee*; and therefore my soul needs healing; I am a sinner, a miserable sinner, therefore God, be merciful to me, Luke xviii. 13. It doth not appear that this hath reference to any particular gross act of sin, but in general to his many sins of infirmity, which his sickness set in order before him, and the dread of the consequences of which made him pray, *Heal my soul*.

5. Mine enemies speak evil of me: when shall he die, and his name perish? 6. And if he come to see me he speaketh vanity, his heart gathereth iniquity to itself when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. 7. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. 8. An evil disease, say they cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more. 9. Yea, mine own particular friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. 10. But thou O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. 11. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. 12. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. 13. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, from everlasting, and to everlasting, Amen, and Amen.

David often complains of the insolent carriage of his enemies towards him when he was sick, which as it was very barbarous in them, so it could not but be very grievous to him. They were not indeed arrived to that modern pitch of wickedness of poisoning his meat and drink, or giving him something to make him sick, but when he was sick they insulted over him, ver. 5. *Mine enemies speak evil of me*; designing thereby to grieve his spirit, to ruin his reputation, and to sink his interests.

1. They longed for his death; *when shall he die, and his name perish with him*; he had but an uncomfortable life, and yet they grudged him that; but it was an useful life, he was upon all accounts the greatest ornament and blessing of his country, and yet it seems there were some who were sick of him, as the Jews were of Paul, crying out, *Away with such a fellow from the earth*; we ought not to desire the death of any, but to desire the death of useful men, for their usefulness, has much in it of the venom of the old serpent: they envied him his name, and the honour he had won, and doubted not but if he were dead, that would be laid in the dust with him; yet, see how they were mistaken, when he had served his generation he did die, (Acts xiii. 39.) but did his name perish? No, it lives and flourishes to this day in the sacred writings, and will to the end of time, for the memory of the just is and shall be blessed.

2. They picked up every thing they could to reproach him with, ver. 6. *If he comes to see me, as it has always been reckoned a piece of neighbourly kindness to visit the sick, he speaketh vanity*, i. e. he pretends friendship, and that his errand is to mourn with me and to comfort me, tells me he is very sorry to see me so much indisposed, and wisheth me my health, but it is all flattery and falsehood: We complain, and justly, of the want of sincerity in our days, and that there is scarce any true friendship to be found among men; but it seems by this the former days were no better than these; David's friends were all compliment, and had nothing of that affection for him in their hearts which they made profession of; but that was not the worst of it, it was upon a mischievous design that they came to see him, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he said or did, and might represent it as they pleased to others, with their own comments upon it, so as to render him odious or ridiculous: *His heart gathereth iniquity to itself*, puts ill constructions upon every thing, and then when he goes among his companions, he tells it them that they may tell it others, *Report, say they, and we will report it*, Jer. xx. 10. If he made any complaints of his illness, they would reproach him for his pusillanimity; if little complaints, for his stupidity: if he prayed or gave them good counsel, they would banter it, and call it canting; if he kept silence for good when the wicked were before him, they would say he had forgot his religion now he was sick: there is no fence against those whose malice thus gathers iniquity.

3. They promised themselves that he would never recover from his sickness, nor never wipe off the odium with which they had loaded him; they *whispered together against him*, ver. 7. speaking that secretly in one another's ears, which they could not for shame speak out, and which, if they did, they knew it would be confuted; whisperers and backbiters are put together among the worst of sinners, Rom. i. 29, 30. They whispered that their plot against him might not be discovered and so defeated; there is seldom whispering (we say) but there is lying, or some mischief on foot. Those whisperers devised evil to David; concluding he would die quickly, they contrived how to break all the measures he had concerted for the public good, to prevent the prosecution of them, and to undo all that he had hitherto been doing: this he calls devising hurt against him; and they doubted not but to gain their point, *for an evil disease, a thing of Belial*, say they, *cleaveth fast unto him*; the reproach with which they had loaded his name, they hoped would cleave so fast to it, that it would perish with him, and then they should gain their point; they went by a modern maxim, *Fortiter calumniari aliquid adhaerebit*; or this disease he is now under will certainly make an end of him; for it is the punishment of some great enormous crime, which he will not be brought to repent of, and proves him, however he has appeared, a son of Belial; or, it is inflicted by Satan, who is called Belial the wicked one, 2 Cor. vi. 15. It is (according to a loose way of speaking some have) a devilish disease, and therefore it will cleave fast to him, and now that he lieth, now his distemper prevails so far as to oblige him to keep his bed, *he shall rise up no more*, we shall be rid of him, and divide the spoil of his preferments: we are not to think it strange, if when good men are sick, there be those that hope for their death, as well as those that fear it, which makes the world not worthy of them, Rom. xi. 10.

4. There was one particularly, in whom he had reposed a great deal of confidence, that took part with his enemies, and was as abusive to him as any of them, ver. 9. *My own familiar friend*; probably he means Ahithophel, who had been his bosom friend and prime minister of state, in whom he trusted as one inviolably firm to him, and whose advice he relied much upon in dealing with his enemies, who *did eat of his bread*, i. e. with whom he had been very intimate, and whom he had taken to sit at the table with

him: nay, whom he had maintained and given a livelihood to, and so obliged both in gratitude and interest to stick to him: they that had their maintenance from the king's palace, did not think it meet for them to seek the king's dishonour, Ezra iv. 11. much less to do him dishonour, yet this base and treacherous confidant of David's forgot all the eaten bread, and lifted up his heel against him that had lifted up his head; not only deserted him, but insulted him, kicked at him, endeavoured to supplant him; those are wicked indeed, whom no curtesy done them, nor confidence reposed in them, will oblige; and let us not think it strange, if we receive abuses from such: David did, and the Son of David; for of Judas the traitor, David here in the spirit spake; our Saviour himself so expounds this, and therefore gave Judas the sop, that the scripture might be fulfilled; *He that eateth bread with me, has lifted up his heel against me*, John xiii. 18—26. Nay, have not we ourselves carried it thus perfidiously and disingenuously towards God? We eat of his bread daily, and yet lift up the heel against him, as Jeshurun, that *reposed fat and kicked*, Deut. xxxii. 15.

Now how did David bear this insolent, ill-natured carriage of his enemies towards him?

1. He prayed to God that they might be disappointed. He said nothing to them, but turned himself to God. *O Lord, be thou merciful to me*, for they are unmerciful, ver. 10. He had prayed in reference to the guilt of his sins, ver. 4. *Lord, be merciful to me*, and now again in reference to the insults of his enemies, *Lord, be merciful to me*, for that is a prayer will fit every case; God's mercy has in it a redress for every grievance: they endeavour to run me down, but Lord, do thou raise me up from this bed of languishing, from which they think I shall never rise. Raise me up that I may requite them; i. e. that I may render them good for evil, so some; for that was David's practice, Psal. vii. 4.—xcv. 13. A good man will even wish for an opportunity of making it to appear, that he bears no malice to those that have been injurious to him; but on the contrary, is ready to do them any good office. Or that, as a king, I may put them under the marks of my just displeasure, banish them the court, and forbid them my table for the future, which would be a necessary piece of justice for warning to others. Perhaps in this prayer is couched a prophecy of the exaltation of Christ, whom God raised up that he might be a just avenger of all the wrongs done to him and to his people, particularly by the Jews, whose utter destruction followed not long after.

2. He assured himself that they would be disappointed, ver. 11. *By this I know that thou favourest me and my interest, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me*. They hoped for his death, but he found himself through mercy recovering, and this would add to the comfort of his recovery; (1.) That it would be a balk to his adversaries, they would be crest-fallen and wretchedly ashamed, and there would be no occasion to upbraid them with their disappointment, they would fret at it themselves. Note, Though we may not take a pleasure in the fall of our enemies, we may take a pleasure in the frustrating their designs against us. (2.) That that would be a token of God's favour to him, and a certain evidence that he did favour him, and would continue to do so. Note, When we can discern the favour of God to us in any mercy personal or public, that doubles it and sweetens it.

3. He dependeth upon God who had thus delivered him from many an evil work, to preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as blessed Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 18. And as for me, so far as thou favourest me, as a fruit of that favour, and to qualify me for the continuance of it, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and in order to that settest me before thy face, hast thine eye always upon me for good; or because thou dost by thy grace uphold me in mine integrity, I know that thou wilt in thy glory set me for ever before thy face. Note, 1. When at any time we suffer in our reputation, our chief concern should be about our integrity, and then we may cheerfully leave it to God to secure our reputation. David knows if he can but persevere in his integrity, he needs not fear his enemies triumphs over him. 2. The best man in the world holds his integrity no longer than God upholds him in it; for by his grace we are what we are, if we be left to ourselves, we shall not only fall, but fall away. 3. It is a great comfort to us, that however we are weak, God is able to uphold us in our integrity, and will do it if we commit the keeping of it to him. 4. If the grace of God did not take a constant care of us we should not be upheld in our integrity: his eye is always upon us, else we should soon start aside from him. 5. Those whom now God upholds in their integrity: he will let before his face for ever, and make them happy in the vision and fruition of himself: *He that endures to the end shall be saved*.

4. The Psalm concludes with a solemn doxology, or adoration of God as the Lord God of Israel, ver. 13. It is not certain whether this verse pertains to this particular psalm; if so it teacheth us this, that a believing hope of our preservation through grace to glory, is enough to fill our hearts with joy, and our mouths with everlasting praise, even in our greatest straits; or whether it were added as the conclusion of the first book of Psalms, which is reckoned to end here; the like being subjoined to Psal. lxxii. Psal. lxxxix. and Psal. cvi. and then it teacheth us to make God the Omega who is the Alpha, to make him the end who is the beginning of every good work. We are here taught, (1.) To give glory to God as the Lord God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, that has done great and kind things for them, and has more and better in reserve. (2.) To give him glory as an eternal God, that hath both his being and his blessedness from everlasting and to everlasting. (3.) To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit; intimated in the double seal set to it; *Amen and Amen*; be it so now, be it so to all eternity. We say Amen to it, and let all others say Amen too.

P S A L M XLII.

If the book of psalms be as some have styled it, a mirror or looking-glass of pious and devout affections, this psalm in particular deserves as much as any one psalm, to be so entitled, and is as proper as any other to kindle and excite such in us; gracious desires are here strong and fervent; gracious hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, are here struggling, but the pleasing passion comes off a conqueror; or we may take it for a conflict between sense and faith; sense objecting, and faith answering, (1.) Faith begins with holy desires towards God, and communion with him, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Sense complains of the darkness and cloudiness of the present condition, aggravated by the remembrance of the former enjoyments, ver. 3, 4. (3.) Faith silences the complaint with the assurance of a good issue at last, ver. 5. (4.) Sense renews its complaints of the present dark and melancholy state, ver. 6, 7. (5.) Faith holds up the heart notwithstanding, with hope that the day will dawn, ver. 8. (6.) Sense repeats its lamentations, ver. 9, 10, and sighs out the same remonstrance it had before made of its grievances. (7.) Faith gets the last word, ver. 11. for the silencing of the complaints of sense, and though it be almost the same with that, ver. 5. yet now it prevails and carries the day. The title doth not tell us who was the penman of this psalm, but most probably it was David and



and we may conjecture it was penned by him at a time when either by Saul's persecution or Absalom's rebellion he was driven from the sanctuary, and cut off from the privilege of waiting upon God in public ordinances. The strain of it is much the same with Psalm lxxiii. and therefore we may presume it was penned by the same hand, and upon the same or like occasion. In singing it, if we be either in outward affliction or inward distress, we may accommodate to ourselves the melancholy expressions we find here; if not, we must, in singing them sympathize with those whose case they speak too plainly, and thank God it is not our own case; but those passages in it, which express and excite holy desires towards God, and dependency on him, we must earnestly endeavour to bring our minds up to.

To the chief musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

**A**S the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? 3. My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? 4. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God; with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holy-day. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

Holy love to God as the chief good and our felicity, is the power of godliness; the very life and soul of religion, without which all external professions and performances are but a shell and carcase: now here we have some of the expressions of that love. Here is,

1. Holy love thirsting; love upon the wing, soaring upwards in holy desires towards the Lord, and towards the remembrance of his name, ver. 1. 2. *My soul panteth, thirsteth for God*, for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him. Now observe,

(1.) When it was that David thus expressed his vehement desire towards God. It was, (1.) When he was debarred from his outward opportunities of waiting on God: when he was banished to the land of Jordan, a great way off from the courts of God's house. Note, Sometimes God teacheth us effectually to know the worth of mercies by the want of them: and whets our appetites to the means of grace, by cutting us short in those means; we are apt to loathe that manna, when we have plenty of it, which will be very precious to us if ever we come to know the scarcity of it. (2.) When he was deprived in a great measure of the inward comfort he used to have in God. He now went mourning, but he went on panting. Note, If God by his grace has wrought in us sincere and earnest desires towards him, we may take comfort from these, when we want those ravishing delights we have sometimes had in God, because lamenting after God is as sure an evidence that we love him, as rejoicing in God. Before the Psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs, which had sorely shaken him, he premiseth this, That he looked upon the living God, as his chief good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm.

(2.) What is the object of his desire, and what it is he thus thirsts after. (1.) He pants after God, he thirsts for God; not the ordinances themselves, but the God of the ordinances. A gracious soul can take little satisfaction in God's courts, if it do not meet with God himself there, *O that I knew where I might find him!* That I might have more of the tokens of his favour, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, and the earnestness of his glory. (2.) He has herein an eye to God as the living God, that has life in himself, and is the fountain of life and all happiness to those that are his. The living God, not only in opposition to dead idols, the works of men's hands, but to all the dying comforts of this world, which perish in the using. Living souls can never take up their rest any where short of a living God. (3.) He longs to come and appear before God, to make himself known to him, as being conscious to himself of his own sincerity; to attend on him, as a servant appears before his master, to pay his respects to him, and receive his commands; to give him an account to him, as one from whom our judgment proceeds. To appear before God is as much the desire of the upright, as it is the dread of the hypocrite. The psalmist knew he could not come into God's court but he must come to his charges, for so was the law, that *none should appear before God empty*, yet he longs to come, and will not grudge the charges.

(3.) What is the degree of this desire? It is very importunate, it is his soul that pants, his soul that thirsts, which speaks not only the sincerity but the strength of his desire; his longing for the water of the well of Bethlehem was nothing to this. He compares it to the panting of a hart or deer, which is naturally hot and dry, especially of a hunted buck after the water-brooks. Thus earnestly doth a gracious soul desire communion with God, thus impatient is it in the want of that communion; so impossible it should take up any thing short of that communion; so insatiable in taking the pleasures of that communion when the opportunity of returns, still thirsting after the full enjoyment of him in the heavenly communion.

2. Holy love, mourning for God's present withdrawals, and the want of the benefit of solemn ordinances, ver. 3. *My tears have been my meat day and night*, during this forced absence from God's house. His circumstances were sorrowful, and he accommodated himself to them, received the impressions, and returned the expressions of sorrow; even the royal prophet was a weeping prophet, when he wanted the comforts of God's house. His tears were mingled with his meat; nay, they were *his meat day and night*, he fed, he feasted upon his own tears, when there was such a just cause for them; and it was a satisfaction to him that he found his heart so much affected with a grievance of this nature. Observe, he did not think it enough to shed a tear or two at parting from the sanctuary, to weep a farewell prayer when he took his leave, but as long as he continued under a forced absence from that place of his delight, he never looked up, but wept day and night. Note, Those that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances constantly miss them, and therefore should constantly mourn for the want of them, till they are restored to them again.

Two things aggravated his grief.

(1.) The reproaches with which his enemies teased him, *They continually say unto me where is thy God?* (1.) Because he was absent from the

ark, the token of God's presence, judging of the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, they concluded he had lost his God. Note, Those are mistaken, who think that when they have robbed us of our bibles, and our ministers, and our solemn assemblies, they have robbed us of our God: for though God has tied us to them when they are to be had, he has not tied himself to them. We know where our God is, and where to find him, when we know not where the ark is, nor where to find that. Wherever we are, there is a way open heaven-ward. (2.) Because God did not presently appear for his deliverance, they concluded that he had abandoned him; but herein also they were deceived: it doth not follow that the saints have lost their God, because they have lost all their other friends. However, by this base reflection on God and his people, they added affliction to the afflicted, and that was what they aimed at. Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul, than that which is intended to shock its hope and confidence in God.

(2.) The remembrance of his former liberties and enjoyments, ver. 4. *Son, remember thy good things*, is a great aggravation of evil things: so much do our powers of reflection and prospect add to the grievance of this present time. David remembered the *days of old*, and then *his soul was poured out in him*, he melted away and the thought almost broke his heart; he poured out his soul within him with sorrow, and then poured out his soul before God in prayer. But what was it that occasioned this colligation of spirit? It was not the remembrance of the pleasures at court, or the entertainments of his own house, from which he was now banished, that afflicted him: but the remembrance of the free access he had formerly had to God's house, and the pleasure he had in attending the sacred solemnities there. (1.) He went to the house of God; though in his time it was but a tent; nay, if this psalm was penned, as many think it was, at the time of his being persecuted by Saul, the ark was then in a private house, 2 Sam. vi. 3. But the meanness, obscurity, and inconvenience of the place, did not lessen his esteem of that sacred symbol of the divine presence. David was a courtier, a prince, a man of honour, a man of business, and yet very diligent in attending God's house, and joining public ordinances; even in the days of Saul, when he and his great men *enquired not at it*, 1 Chron. xiii. 3. Whatever others did, David and his house would serve the Lord. (2.) He went with the multitude, and thought it no disparagement to his dignity to be at the head of a croud in attending upon God. Nay, this added to the pleasure of it, that he was accompanied with a multitude, and therefore it is twice mentioned, as that which he greatly lamented the want of now. The more the better, in the service of God, it is the liker to heaven, and a sensible help to our comfort in the communion of saints. (3.) He went with the voice of joy and praise, not only with joy and praise in his heart, but with the outward expressions of it, proclaiming his joy, and speaking forth the high praises of his God. Note, When we wait upon God in public ordinances, we have reason to do it both with cheerfulness and thankfulness, to take to ourselves the comfort, and give to God the glory of our liberty of access to him. (4.) He went to keep holy days, not to keep them in vain mirth and recreation, but in religious exercises. Solemn days are spent most comfortably in solemn assemblies.

2. Holy love, hoping, ver. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* His sorrow was upon a very good account, and yet it must not exceed its due limits, nor prevail to depress his spirits; he therefore communes with his own heart for his relief. Come my soul, I have something to say to thee in thy heaviness: Let us consider, (1.) The cause of it. Thou art cast down as one stooping and sinking under a burden, *Prov. xii. 25*. Thou art disquieted in confusion and disorder, now, why art thou so? This may be taken either as an enquiring question, let the cause of this uneasiness be duly weighed, and see whether it be a just cause? Our disquietments would many times vanish before a strict scrutiny into the grounds and reasons of them, *Why am I cast down?* Is there a cause, a real cause? Have not others more cause that do not make so much ado? Have not we at the same time cause to be encouraged? Or it may be taken as an exhorting question; those that commune much with their own hearts, will often have occasion to chide them, as David here. Why do I thus dishonour God by my melancholy dejections? Why do I discourage others, and do so much injury to myself? Can I give a good account of this tumult? (2.) The cure of it. *Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him*. A believing confidence in God is a sovereign antidote against prevailing despondency and disquiet of spirit. And therefore when we chide ourselves for our dejections, we must charge ourselves to hope in God; when the soul embraces itself, it sinks; if it catch hold on the power and promise of God, it keeps the head above water. *Hope in God*. (1.) That he shall have glory from us *I shall yet praise him*; I shall experience such a change in my estate, that I shall not want matter for praise; and such a change in my spirit, that I shall not want a heart for praise. It is the greatest honour and happiness of a man, and the greatest desire and hope of every good man, to be unto God for a name and a praise. What is the crown of heaven's blest but this, that there we shall be for ever praising God? and what is our support under our present woes but this, that we shall yet praise God, that they shall not prevent or abate our endless hallelujahs? (2.) That we shall have comfort in him. We shall praise him for the help of his countenance; for his favour, and the support we have by it, and the satisfaction we have in it. Those that know how to value and improve the light of God's countenance, will find in that a suitable, seasonable, and sufficient help in the worst of times; and that which will furnish them with constant matter for praise, David's believing expectation of this kept him from sinking, nay it kept him from drooping; his harp was a palliative cure of Saul's melancholy, but his hope was an effectual cure of his own.

6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. 7. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. 8. Yet the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. 9. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy? 10. As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me: while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? 11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Complaints



Complaints and comforts here, as before, take their turn, like day and night, in the course of nature.

1. He complains of the dejections of his Spirit, but comforts himself with the thoughts of God, *ver. 6.* (1.) In his troubles, his soul was dejected, and he goes to God and tells him so, *O my God, my soul is cast down within me.* It is a great support to us, when upon any account we are distressed, that we have liberty of access to God, and liberty of speech before him, and may open to him the causes of our dejection. David had communed with his own heart about its own bitterness, and had not as yet found relief; and therefore he turns to God, and opens before him the trouble. Note, When we cannot get relief for our burdened spirits, by pleading with ourselves, we should try what we can do by praying to God, and leaving our case with him. We cannot still these winds and waves, but we know who can. (2.) In his dejections, his soul was elevated, and finding the disease very painful, he had recourse to that as a sovereign remedy. My soul is plunged; therefore, to prevent its sinking, I will remember thee, meditate upon thee, and call upon thee, and try what that will do to keep up my spirit. Note, The way to forget the sense of our miseries, is to remember the God of our mercies. It was an uncommon case when the psalmist remembered God and was troubled, *Psalms lxxvii. 3.* Ordinarily he remembered God, and was comforted, and therefore had recourse to that expedient now. He was now driven to the utmost borders of the land of Canaan, to shelter himself there from the rage of his persecutors, sometimes to the country about Jordan, and when discovered there, then to the land of the Hermonites, or to a hill called Mizar, or the little hill; but (1.) Wherever he went, he took his religion along with him; in all these places he remembered God, and lift up his heart to him, and kept his secret communion with him. This is the comfort of the banished, the wanderers, the travellers, of those that are strangers in a strange land, that wherever they are, there is a way open heaven-wards: *Undique ad cælos tantundem est via.* (2.) Wherever he was he retained his affection for the courts of God's house; from the land of Jordan, or from the top of the hills he used to look a long look, a longing look, towards the place of the sanctuary, and wish himself there. Distance and time could not make him forget that which his heart was so much upon, and which lay so near it.

(2.) He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure against him, but comforts himself with the hopes of the return of his favour in due time.

(1.) He saw his troubles coming from God's wrath, and that discouraged him, *ver. 7.* *Deep calls unto deep,* one affliction comes upon the neck of another, as if it were called to hasten after it, and thy water spouts give the sign, and sound the alarm of war. It may be meant of the terrors and tosses of his mind, under the apprehensions of God's anger. One frightful thought summoned another, and made way for it, as is usual in melancholy people; he was overpowered and overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, like that of the old world, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Or, it is an allusion to a ship at sea, in a great storm, tossed by the roaring waves, which go over it, *Psal. cvii. 25.* Whatever waves and billows of affliction go over us at any time, we must call them God's waves and his billows, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and may encourage ourselves to hope, that though we be threatened we shall not be ruined; for the waves and billows are under a divine check, *The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of these many waters.* Let not good men think it strange, if they be exercised with many and various trials, and if they come thick upon them, God knows what he doth, and so shall they shortly. Jonah in the whale's belly made use of these words of David, *Jonah ii. 3.* (they are exactly the same in the original) and of them they are literally true, *All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;* for the book of psalms is contrived so as to reach every one's case.

(2.) He expected his deliverance to come from God's favour, *ver. 8.* *Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness.* Things are bad, but they shall not always be so; *non se male nunc & olim se erit.* After the storm there will come a calm, and the prospect of this supported him, when deep called unto deep. Observe, (1.) What he promised himself from God. *The Lord will command his loving-kindness.* He eyes the favour of God, as the fountain of all the good he looked for, that is life, that is better than life; and with that, God will gather those from whom he has in a little wrath hid his face, *Ist. liv. 7, 8.* God's conferring of his favour, is called his commanding it, which intimates both the freeness of it, we cannot pretend to merit it, but it is bestowed in a way of sovereignty, he gives like a king: and the efficacy of it; he speaks his loving-kindness, and makes us to hear it: speaks and it is done. He commands deliverance, *Psal. xlii. 4.* commands the blessing, *Psal. cxxxiii. 3.* as one having authority. By commanding his loving-kindness, he commands down the waves and the billows, and they shall obey him. This he will do in the day time, for God's loving-kindness will make day in the soul at any time: Though weeping has endured for a night, a long night, yet joy will come in the morning. (2.) What he promised for himself to God. If God command his loving-kindness for him, he will meet it, and bid it welcome with his best affections and devotions. (1.) He will rejoice in God, *in the night shall his song be with me.* The mercies we receive in the day, we ought to return thanks for at night; when others are sleeping, we should be praising God. See *Psal. cxix. 62.* *At midnight will I rise to give thanks.* In silence and solitude, when we are retired from the hurries of the world, we must be pleading ourselves with the thoughts of God's goodness. Or in the night of affliction, before the day dawns in which God commands his loving-kindness; I will sing songs of praise in the prospect of it. Even in tribulation the saints can rejoice in hope of the glory of God; sing in hope, and praise in hope, *Rom. v. 2, 3.* It is God's prerogative to give songs in the night, *Job xxxv. 10.* (2.) He will seek to God in a constant dependence upon him. *My prayer shall be to the God of my life.* Our believing expectation of mercy must not supersede, but quicken our prayers for it. God is the God of our life, in whom we live and move, the author and giver of all our comforts, and therefore to whom should we apply ourselves by prayer but to him? And from him what good may we not expect? It would put life into our prayers, in them to eye God as the God of our life, for then it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we stand up to make request.

3. He complains of the insolence of his enemies, and yet comforts himself in God as his friend, *ver. 9, 10, 11.*

(1.) His complaint is, that his enemies oppressed and reproached him, and this made a great impression upon him. (1.) They oppressed him to that degree that he went mourning, from day to day, from place to place, *ver. 9.* He did not break out into indecent passions, though abused as never man was, but he silently wept out his grief, and went mourning; and for this we cannot blame him, it must needs grieve a man that truly loves his country, and seeks the good of it, to see himself run upon, and hardly used, as if he were an enemy to it; Yet David ought not from hence to conclude, that God had forgotten him, and cast him off, nor thus to expostulate with him, as if he did him as much wrong in suffering him to be

trampled upon, as they did that trampled upon him. *Why go I mourning?* and *why hast thou forgotten me?* We may complain to God, but we are not allowed thus to complain of him. (2.) They reproached him so cuttingly, that it was a sword in his bones, *ver. 10.* He had mentioned before, what the reproach was that touched him thus to the quick, and here he repeats it, *They say daily unto me, Where is thy God?* A reproach which was therefore very grievous to him, both because it reflected dishonour upon God, and was intended to discourage his hope in God, which he had enough to do to keep up in any measure, and which was but too apt to fail of itself.

(2.) His comfort is, that God is his rock, *ver. 9.* A rock to build upon, a rock to take shelter in; the rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength, would be his rock, his strength in the inner man, both for doing and suffering. And to him he had access with confidence, to God his rock he might say what he had to say, and be sure of a gracious audience. He therefore repeats what he had said, *ver. 5.* and concludes with it, *ver. 11.* *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* His griefs and fears were clamorous and troublesome, they were not silenced, though they were again and again answered; but here at length his faith came off a conqueror, and forced the enemies to quit the field. And he gains this victory, (1.) By repeating what he had before said; chiding himself, as before, for his dejections and disquietments, and encouraging himself to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay himself upon his God. Note, It may be of great use to us, to think our good thoughts over again, and if we do not gain our point with them at first, perhaps we may the second time: however, where the heart goes along with the words, it is no vain repetition. We have need to press the same thing over and over again upon our own hearts, and all little enough. (2.) By adding one word to it; there he hoped to praise God for the salvation that was in his countenance; here I will praise him, faith he, as the salvation of my countenance, from the present cloud that is upon it; if God smile upon me, that will make me look pleasant, look up, look forward, look round with pleasure: he adds, *And my God,* related to me, in covenant with me; all that he is, all that he has is mine, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise; this thought enabled him to triumph over all his griefs and fears; God's being with the faints in heaven, and being their God, is that which will wipe away all tears from their eyes, *Rev. xxi. 3, 4.*

P S A L M XLIII.

This psalm, it is likely, was penned upon the same occasion with the former, and having no title, may be looked upon as an appendix to it: the psalmist presently returning, he had immediate recourse to the same remedy, because he had entered it in his book, with a probatum est upon it. The second verse of this psalm is almost the very same with the ninth verse of the foregoing psalm, as the fifth of this is exactly the same with the eleventh of that. Christ himself, who had the Spirit without measure, when there was occasion, prayed a second and third time, saying the same words, *Mat. xxvi. 44.* In this psalm, (1.) He appeals to God concerning the injuries that were done him by his enemies, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) He prays to God to restore to him the free enjoyment of public ordinances again, and promiseth to make a good improvement of them, *ver. 3, 4.* (3.) He endeavours to still the tumult of his own spirit, with a lively hope and confidence in God, *ver. 5.* which if we labour after, in singing this psalm, we sing with grace in our hearts.

1. JUDGE me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. 2. For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning, because of the oppression of the enemy? 3. O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. 4. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

David here makes this application to God by faith and prayer, as his judge, his strength, his guide, his joy, his hope, with suitable affections and expressions.

1. As his judge, his righteous judge, who he knew would judge him, and who (being conscious of his own integrity) he knew would judge for him, *ver. 1.* Judge me, O God, and plead my cause. They were those that impeached him, against whom he is defendant, and from their courts, where he stood unjustly convicted and condemned, he appeals to the court of heaven, the supreme judicature; praying to have their judgment given against him reversed, and his innocency cleared. There were those that had injured him, against whom he is plaintiff, and exhibits his complaint to him who is the avenger of wrong, praying justice for himself and upon them. Observe, (1.) Who his enemies were, with whom he had this struggle. Here was an ill body of men, whom he calls an ungodly, or unmerciful nation, and those that are unmerciful make it appear that they are ungodly, for those that have any fear or love of their maker, will have compassion on their fellow servants. And here was one ill man the head of them, a deceitful and unjust man: most probably Saul, who not only shewed no kindness to David, but dealt most peridiously and dishonestly with him. If Absalom was the man he meant, his character was no better. As long as there are such bad men out of hell, nations of them, it is not strange that good men, who are yet out of heaven, meet with hard and base treatment. Some think that David, by the Spirit of prophecy, calculated this psalm for the use of the Jews in their captivity in Babylon, and that the Chaldeans are the ungodly nation here meant; and to them it was very applicable, but only as other like scriptures, none of which are of private interpretation. God might design it for their use, whether David did or no. (2.) What is his prayer with reference to them; Judge me. As to the quarrel God had with him for sin, he prays, *Enter not into judgment with me,* for then I shall be condemned; but as to the quarrel his enemies had with him, he prays, *Lord, judge me,* for I know that I shall be justified, *plead my cause against them,* i. e. take my part, and in thy providence appear on my behalf. He that has an honest cause, may expect that God will plead it. Plead my cause so as to deliver me from them, that they may not have their will against me. We must reckon our cause sufficiently pleaded, if we be delivered, though our enemies be not destroyed.

2. As his strength is all-sufficient strength; so he eyes God, *ver. 2.*



*Thou art the God of my strength, my God, my strength, from whom all my strength is derived, in whom I strengthen myself, who hast many a time strengthened me, and without whom I am weak as water, and utterly unable either to do or suffer any thing for thee. David now went mourning, destitute of spiritual joys, yet he found God the God of his strength however; if we cannot comfort ourselves in God, we may stay ourselves upon him, and may have spiritual supports when we want spiritual suavities. David here pleads this with God; thou art the God on whom I depend as my strength, why then dost thou cast me off? This was a mistake; for God never cast off any that trusted in him, whatever melancholy apprehensions they may have of their own state. Thou art the God of my strength, why then is mine enemy too strong for me? and why go I mourning because of his oppressive power? It is hard to reconcile the mighty force of the church's enemies with the almighty power of the church's God; but the day will reconcile them, when all his enemies shall become his foot-stool.*

3. As his guide, his faithful guide, *ver. 3. Lead me, bring me to thy holy hill.* He prays, (1.) That God by his providence would bring him back from his banishment, and open a way for him again to the free enjoyment of the privileges of God's sanctuary. His heart is upon the holy hill and the tabernacles, not upon his family comforts, or his court preferments or diversions: he could bear the want of these, but he is impatient to see God's tabernacles again: nothing so amiable in his eyes as those; thither he would fain be brought back. In order to this, he prays, *Send out thy light and thy truth, i. e. Let me have this as a fruit of thy favour, which is light, and the performance of thy promise, which is truth; and we need desire no more to make us happy, than the good that flows from God's favour, and is included in his promise. That mercy, that truth, is enough, is all; and when we see these in God's providences, we see ourselves under a very safe conduct. Note, Those whom God leads, he leads to his holy hill, and to his tabernacles; those therefore who pretend to be led by the Spirit, and yet turn their backs upon instituted ordinances, certainly deceive themselves.* (2.) That God by his grace would bring him into communion with himself, and prepare him for the vision and fruition of himself in the other world. Some of the Jewish writers by the light and truth here understand Messiah the prince, and Elias his fore-runner; these are come, in answer to the prayers of the Old Testament; but we are still to pray for God's light and truth, i. e. the Spirit of light and truth, who supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence, to lead us into the mystery of godliness, and to guide us in the way to heaven. When God sends his light and truth into our hearts, those will guide us to the upper world in all our devotions, as well as in all our aims and expectations; and if we conscientiously follow that light and truth; they will certainly bring us to the holy hill above.

4. As his joy, his exceeding joy. If God guide him to his tabernacles, if he restore him to his former liberties, he knows very well what he has to do, *Then will I go unto the altar of God, ver. 4.* he will get as near as he can unto God, his exceeding joy. Note, (1.) Those that come to the tabernacles, should come to the altar; that come to ordinances, should qualify themselves to come, and then come to special ordinances, to those that are most affecting and most binding. The nearer we come, the closer we cleave to God, the better. (2.) Those that come to the altar of God, must see to it that therein they come unto God, and draw near to him with the heart, with a true heart: We come in vain to holy ordinances, if we do not in them come to the holy God. (3.) Those that come unto God, must come to him as their exceeding joy, not only as their future bliss, but as their present joy; and that not a common, but an exceeding joy, far exceeding all the joys of sense and time. The praise in the original is very emphatical, unto God the gladness of my joy, or of my triumph. Whatever we rejoice or triumph in, God must be the joy of it, all our joy in it must terminate in him, and must pass through the gift of the giver. (4.) When we come to God as our exceeding joy, our comforts in him must be the matter of our praises of him as God, and our God; *Upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.* David was an artist at the harp, *1 Sam. xvi. 16-18.* and with that in which he excelled he would praise God; for God is to be praised with the best we have; it is fit he should be so who is the best.

5. As his hope, his never-failing hope, *ver. 5.* Here, as before, David quarrels with himself for his dejections and despondencies, and owns he did ill to yield to them, and that he had no reason to do so; *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* And then quiets himself in the believing expectation he had of giving glory to God: *Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him;* and of enjoying glory with God, he is *the health of my countenance and my God.* This is what we cannot too much insist upon, for it is what we must live and die by.

# P S A L M XLIV.

*We are not told either who was the penman of this psalm, or when, and upon what occasion it was penned; upon a melancholy occasion we are sure, not so much to the penman himself, then we could have found occasions enough for it in the history of David and his afflictions, but to the church of God in general; and therefore if we suppose it penned by David, yet we must attribute it purely to the spirit of prophecy, and must conclude that that spirit (whatever he had) had in view the captivity of Babylon, or the sufferings of the Jewish church under Antiochus; or rather, the afflicted state of the Christian church in its early days, to which *ver. 22.* is applied by the apostle, *Rom. viii. 36.* and indeed in all its days on earth, for it is its determined lot, that it must enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. And if we have any gospel psalm, pointing at the privileges and comforts of Christians, why should we not have one pointing at their trials and exercises? It is a psalm calculated for a day of fasting and humiliation, upon occasion of some public calamity either pressing or threatening. In it the church is taught, (1.) To own with thankfulness to the glory of God, the great things God had done for their fathers, *ver. 1-8.* (2.) To exhibit a memorial of their present calamitous estate, *ver. 9-16.* (3.) To file a protestation of their integrity and adherence to God notwithstanding, *ver. 17-22.* (4.) To lodge a petition at the throne of grace for succour and relief, *ver. 22-26.* In singing this psalm we ought to give God the praise of what he has formerly done for his people to represent our own grievances, or sympathize with those parts of the church that are in distress, to engage ourselves, whatever happens, to cleave to God and duty, and then cheerfully to wait the event.*

1 To the chief musician for the sons of Korah, MASCHIL.

1. **WE** have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.* 2. *How thou didst*

drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; *how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.* 3. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them. 4. Thou art my king, O God, command deliverances for Jacob. 5. Through thee will we push down our enemies; through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. 6. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. 7. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. 8. In God we boast all the day long: and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

Some observe that most of the psalms that are entitled Maschil, psalms of instructions, are sorrowful psalms; for afflictions give instructions, and sorrow of spirit opens the ear to them; *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teacheest.*

In these verses, the church, though now trampled upon, calls to remembrance the days of her triumph, or her triumph in God, and over her enemies. This is very largely mentioned here, (1.) As an aggravation of the present distress. The yoke of servitude cannot but lay very heavy on the necks of those that used to wear the crown of victory; and the tokens of God's displeasure must needs be most grievous to those that have been long accustomed to the tokens of his favour. (2.) As an encouragement to hope that God would yet turn again their captivity, and return in mercy to them; and accordingly he mixes prayers and comfortable expectations with his record of former mercies. Observe,

1. Their commemoration of the great things God had formerly done for them. In general, *ver. 1. Our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days.* Observe, (1.) The many operations of providence are here spoken of as one work. They have told us the work which thou didst, for there is a wonderful harmony and uniformity in all that God doth, and the many wheels make but one wheel, *Ezek. x. 13.* many works make but one work. (2.) It is a debt which every age owes to posterity, to keep an account of God's works of wonder, and transmit the knowledge of them to the next generation. Those that went before us told us what God did in their days, we are bound to tell those that come after us what he has done in our days, and let them do the like justice to those that shall succeed them; thus shall one generation praise his works to another, *Psal. cxlv. 4.* the fathers to the children shall make known his truth, *Isa. xxxviii. 19.* (3.) We must not only make mention of the work God has done in our own days, but must also acquaint ourselves and our children with what he did in the times of old, long before our own days: and of this we have in the scripture a sure word of history, as sure as the word of prophecy. (4.) Children must diligently attend to what their parents tell them of the wonderful works of God, and keep it in remembrance, as that which will be of great use to them. (5.) Former experiences of God's power and goodness are strong supports to faith, and powerful pleas in prayer under present calamities. See how Gideon insists upon it, *Judg. vi. 13. Where be all his miracles which our father told us of!* In particular, their fathers had told them,

(1.) How wonderfully God planted Israel in Canaan at first, *ver. 2, 3.* He drove out the natives to make room for Israel, afflicted them, and cast them out, gave them as dust to Israel's sword, and as driven stubble to their bow. The many complete victories which Israel obtained over the Canaanites, under the command of Joshua, were not to be attributed to themselves, nor could they challenge the glory of them; (1.) They were not owing to their own merit, but to God's favour and free grace: it was through the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour to them; not for thy righteousness or the uprightness of thy heart doth God drive them out from before thee, *Deut. ix. 5, 6.* but because God would perform the oath which he swore unto their fathers, *Deut. vii. 8.* The less praise this allows us, the more comfort this administers to us, that we may see all our successes and enlargements coming to us from the favour of God and the light of his countenance. (2.) They were not owing to their own might but to God's power engaged for them, without which all their own efforts and endeavours had been fruitless. It was not by their own sword that they got the land in possession, though they had great numbers of mighty men; nor did their own arm save them from being driven back by the Canaanites and put to shame; but it was God's right hand and his arm. He fought for Israel, else they had fought in vain; it was through him that they did valiantly and victoriously: It was God that planted Israel in that good land, as the careful husbandmen plants a tree, from which he promiseth himself fruit. See *Psal. lxxx. 8.* This is applicable to the planting of the Christian church in the world, by the preaching of the gospel; Paganism was wonderfully driven out, as the Canaanites, not all at once, but by little and little, not by any human policy or power, for God chose not to do it by the weak and foolish things of the world, but by the wisdom and power of God; Christ by his Spirit went forth conquering and to conquer; and the remembrance of that is a great support and comfort to those that groan under the yoke of antichristian tyranny; for to the state of the church under the power of the New Testament Babylon, some think (and particularly the learned Amyraldus) the complaints in the latter part of this psalm may very fitly be accommodated. He that by his power and goodness planted a church for himself in the world, will certainly support it by the same power and goodness, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(2.) How frequently he had given them success against their enemies that attempted to disturb them in the possession of that good land, *ver. 7. Thou hast, many a time, saved us from our enemies, and hast put to flight, and so put to shame, them that hated us:* Witness the successes of the judges against the nations that oppressed Israel. Many a time have the persecutors of the Christian church, and those that hate it, been put to shame by the power of truth, *Acts vi. 10.*

2. The good use they make of this record, and had formerly made of it, in consideration of the great things God had done for their fathers of old.

(1.) They had taken God for their sovereign Lord, had sworn allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection, *ver. 4. Thou art my king, O God.* He speaks in the name of the church, as *Psal. lxxiv. 12. Thou art my king of old;* God has as a king made laws for his church, provided for the peace and good order of it, judged for it, pleaded its cause, fought its battles, and protected it; it is his kingdom in the world, and ought to be subject to him and to pay him tribute; or as the psalmist speaks for himself here; Lord, *Thou art my king,* Whither shall I go but to thee with my petitions? The favour I ask is not for myself, but for thy church. Note, It is every one's duty to improve their personal interest at a throne of grace, for



for the public welfare and prosperity of the people of God; as Moses, *Exod. xxxiii. 13.*

(2.) They had always applied themselves to him by prayer for deliverance. when at any time they were in distress: *Command deliverance for Jacob.* Observe, (1.) The enlargement of their desire. They pray for deliverances, not one, but many, as many as they had need of, how many soever they were; a series of deliverances, a deliverance from every danger. (2.) The strength of their faith in the power of God; they do not say work deliverances, but command them, which notes his doing it easily and instantly; speak, and it is done; such was the faith of the centurion, *Matt. viii. 8. Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed;* and his doing it effectually: command it, as one having authority, whose command will be obeyed; *Where the word of a king is,* there is power, much more the word of the King of kings.

(3.) They had trusted and triumphed in him. As they owned that it was not their own sword and bow that had saved them, *ver. 3.* so neither did they trust to their own sword or bow to save them for the future, *ver. 6. I will not trust in my bow,* nor in any of my military preparations, as if those would stand me in stead without God; no, *through thee will we push down our enemies,* *ver. 5. i. e.* we will attempt it in thy strength, relying only upon that, and not upon the number or valour of our forces; and having thee on our side, we will not doubt of success in the attempt: *Through thy name,* i. e. by virtue of thy wisdom directing us, thy power strengthening us and working for us, and thy promise securing success to us, we shall, *we will tread them under that rise up against us.*

(4.) They had made him their joy and praise, *ver. 8. In God we have boasted,* in him we do and will boast every day, and all the day long; when their enemies boasted of their strength and successes, as Sennacherib and Rabshakeh heeded Hezekiah, they owned they had nothing to boast of in answer thereunto, but their relation to God, and their interest in him; and if he were for them, they could set all the world at defiance, *Let him that glorifies, glory in the Lord,* and let that for every exclude all other boasting. Let those that trust in God make their boast in him, for they know whom they have trusted, let them boast in him all the day long, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted. But let them withal praise his name for ever; if they have the comfort of his name, let them give unto him the glory due to it.

9. But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame: and goest not forth with our armies. 10. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves. 11. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat: and hast scattered us among the heathen. 12. Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price. 13. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. 14. Thou makest us a by-word among the heathen: a shaking of the head among the people. 15. My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me: 16. For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth: by reason of the enemy and avenger.

The people of God here complain to him of the low and afflicted condition that they were in, under the prevailing power of their enemies and oppressors, which was the more grievous to them because they were now trampled upon, who had always been used in their struggles with their neighbours to win the day and get the upper hand, and because those were now their oppressors, whom they had many a time triumphed over and made tributaries; and especially because they had boasted in their God, with great assurance that he would still protect and prosper them, which made the distress they were in, and the disgrace they were under, the more shameful. Let us see what the complaint is.

1. That they wanted the usual tokens of God's favour to them, and presence with them, *ver. 9. Thou hast cast off,* i. e. thou seemest to have cast us off, and our cause, and to have cast off thy wonted care of us, and concern for us, and so has put us to shame, for we boasted of the constancy and perpetuity of thy favour: our armies go forth as usual, but they are put to flight, we gain no ground, but lose what we have gained, for thou goest not forth with them, for if thou didst, which way soever they turned they would prosper: but it is quite contrary. Note, God's people when they are cast down, are tempted to think themselves cast off, and forsaken of God, but it is a mistake. *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid,* *Rom. xi. 1.*

2. That they were put to the work before their enemies in the field of battle, *ver. 10. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy,* as Joshua complained when they met with a repulse at Ai, *Josh. viii. 8.* We are disappointed, and have lost the ancient valour of Israelites; we flee, we fall before those that used to flee and fall before us, and then they that hate us have the plunder of our camp, and of our country; they spoil for themselves, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on. Attempts to shake off the Babylonish yoke have been ineffectual, and we have rather lost ground by them.

3. That they were doomed to the sword and to captivity, *ver. 11. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat.* They make no more conscience of killing an Israelite than of killing a sheep; nay, like the butcher, they make a trade of it, they take a pleasure in it as a hungry man in his meat: and we are led with as much ease, and as little resistance, as a lamb to the slaughter; many are slain and the rest scattered among the heathen, continually insulted by their malice, or in danger of being infected by their iniquities. They looked upon themselves as bought and sold, and charged it upon God, *Thou sellest thy people,* when they should have charged it upon their own sin, *for your iniquities have you sold yourselves,* *Isa. i. 1.* However, thus far was right, that they looked above the instruments of their trouble, and kept their eye upon God, as well knowing that their worst enemies had no power against them, but *what was given them from above;* they own it was God, that delivered them into the hands of the ungodly, as that which is sold is delivered to the buyer. Thou sellest them for nought, and dost not increase in their price, so it may be read; dost not sell them by auction to those that will bid most for them, but in haste to those that will bid first for them; any one shall have them that will. Or, as we read it, *thou dost not increase thy wealth by their price;* intimating, that they could have suffered this contently, if they had been sure that it would have redounded to the glory of God, and that his interest might have been some way served by their sufferings; but it was quite contrary, Israel's disgrace turned to God's dishonour, so that he was so far from being a gainer, in his glory by the sale of them, that it should seem he was greatly a loser by it, see *Isa. lii. 5. Ezek. xxxvi. 20.*

4. That they were loaded with contempt, and all possible ignominy put upon them: In this also they acknowledge God, *thou makest us a reproach,* i. e. thou bringest those calamities upon us, which occasion the reproach, and thou permittest their virulent tongues to smite us. They complain, (1.) That they were ridiculed and bantered, and were looked upon as the most contemptible people under the sun; their troubles were turned to their reproach, and upon the account of them they were derided. (2.) That their neighbours, and those about them, from whom they could not withdraw, were most abusive to them, *ver. 13.* (3.) That the heathen and the people that were strangers to the common-wealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise, made them a by-word, and shook their head at them, as triumphing in their fall, *ver. 14.* (4.) That the reproach was constant and incessant, *ver. 15. My confusion is continually before me.* The church in general, the psalmist in particular, was continually teased and vexed with the insults of the enemy; to those that are going down every one cries, *Down with them.* (5.) That it was very grievous, and in a manner overwhelmed him; *the shame of my face has covered me.* He blushed for sin, or rather for the dishonour done to God, and then it was a holy blushing. (6.) That it reflected upon God himself, the reproach which the enemy and the avenger cast upon them, was downright blasphemy against God, *ver. 16. and 2 Kings xix. 3.* Therefore no doubt but God would appear for them. As there is no trouble more grievous to a generous and ingenious mind than reproach and calumny, so there is none more grievous to a holy gracious soul than blasphemy and dishonour done to God.

17. All this is come upon us: yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. 18. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way. 19. Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. 20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange God; 21. Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. 22. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. 23. Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD? arise, cast us not off for ever. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face? and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? 25. For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly cleaveth unto the earth. 26. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies sake.

The people of God being greatly afflicted and oppressed, here apply themselves to him, (whither else should they go?)

1. By way of appeal, concerning their integrity, which he only is an infallible judge of, and which he will certainly be the reward of.

Two things they call God to witness to.

1. That though they suffered these hard things, yet they kept close to God, and to their duty, *ver. 17. All this is come upon us,* and it is as bad, perhaps as bad can be, *yet have we not forgotten thee;* nor cast off the thoughts of thee, nor deserted the worship of thee; for though we cannot deny but that we have dealt foolishly, yet we have not dealt foolishly in thy covenant, so as to cast thee off, and take to other gods. Though idolaters were our conquerors, we did not therefore entertain any more favourable thoughts of their idols and idolatries; though thou hast seemed to forsake us and withdraw from us, yet we have not therefore forsaken thee. The trouble they had been long in, was very great; we have been sore broken in the place of dragons, i. e. among men as fierce, and furious, and cruel as dragons; we have been covered with the shadow of death, i. e. we have been under deep melancholy, and apprehensive of nothing but death; we have been wrapped up in obscurity, and buried alive; and thou hast thus broken us, thou hast thus covered us, *ver. 19.* yet we have not harboured any hard thoughts of thee, nor meditated a retreat from thy service; though thou hast slain us, we have continued to trust in thee, *our heart is not turned back,* we have not secretly withdrawn our affections from thee, neither have our steps, either in our religious worship, or in our conversation, declined from thy way, *ver. 18.* the way which thou hast appointed us to walk in. When the heart turns back, the steps will soon decline; for it is the evil heart of unbelief that inclines us to depart from God. Note, We may the better bear our troubles, how pressing soever, if in them we still hold fast our integrity. While our troubles do not drive us from our duty to God, we should not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God; for he will not leave us, if we do not leave him.

For the proof of their integrity, they take God's omniscience to witness, which is as much the comfort of the upright in heart, as it is the terror of hypocrites, *ver. 20, 21. If we have forgotten the name of our God,* under pretence that he had forgotten us, or in our distress had stretched out our hands to a strange god, as more likely to help us, *shall not God search this out?* Shall he not know it more fully and distinctly than we know that which we have with the greatest care and diligence searched out? Shall he not judge it, and call us to an account for it? Forgetting God was a heart-sin, and stretching out the hand to a strange god was often a secret sin, *Ezek. viii. 12.* But heart-sins, and secret-sins are known to God, and must be reckoned for; for he knows the secrets of the hearts, and therefore is an infallible judge of the words and actions.

(2.) That therefore they suffered these hard things, because they kept close to God and to their duty, *ver. 22. It is for thy sake that we are killed all the day long,* because we stand related to thee, are called by thy name, call upon thy name, and will not worship other gods. In this the spirit of prophecy had reference to those who suffered even unto death, for the testimony of Christ, to whom it is applied, *Rom. viii. 36.* So many were killed and put to such lingering deaths, that they were in the killing all the day long; so universally was this practised, that when a man became a Christian, he reckoned himself as a *sheep appointed for the slaughter.*

2. By way of petition, with references to their present distress, that God would in his own due time work deliverance for them. Their request is very importunate, *Awake, arise, ver. 23. Arise for our help, redeem us,* *ver. 26.* come speedily and powerfully to our relief, *Psalm. lxxx. 2. Stir up thy strength, and come and save us.* They complained, *ver. 12.* that God had sold them; here they pray, *ver. 23.* that God would redeem them, for there is no appealing from God, but by appealing to him; if he sells us, it is not any one else that can redeem us; the same hand that tears must heal, that smites must bind up, *Hos. vi. 1.* They complained, *ver. 9. Thou hast cast us off;* but here they pray, *ver. 23. Cast us not off for ever.* Let us not be finally forsaken of God. The expostulations are very moving, *why sleepest thou? ver. 23.* He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when he doth not presently appear for the deliver-



ance of his people, they are tempted to think he sleeps; The expression is figurative, as *Pfalm lxxviii. 65. Then the Lord awoke as one out of sleep*; but it was applicable to Christ in the letter, *Matt. viii. 24. he was asleep when his disciples were in a storm, and they awoke him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish, wherefore hidest thou thy face*, that we may not see thee and the light of thy countenance? Or, that thou mayest not see us and our distresses? Thou forgettest our affliction and our oppression, for it still continues, and we see no way open for our deliverance. And lastly, The pleas are very proper, not their own merit and righteousness, though they had the testimony of their consciences concerning their integrity, but they plead the poor sinners pleas. (1.) Their own misery, which made them the proper object of the divine compassion, *ver. 25. Our soul is bowed down to the dust*, under prevailing grief and fear, we are become as creeping things, the most despicable animals, *our belly cleaveth unto the earth*; we cannot lift up ourselves, neither revive our own drooping spirits, nor recover ourselves, out of our low and sad condition; and we lie exposed to be trodden on by every insulting foe. (2.) God's mercy; O redeem us for thy mercy sake, we depend upon the goodness of thy nature, which is the glory of thy name, *Exod. xxxiv. 6. and upon those sure mercies of David*, which are conveyed by the covenant to all his spiritual seed.

P S A L M XLV.

*This psalm is an illustrious prophecy of Messiah the prince: it is all over gospel, and points to him only, as a bridegroom espousing the church to himself, and as a king ruling in it, and ruling for it: And it is probable our Saviour has reference to this psalm, when he compares the kingdom of heaven more than once, to a nuptial solemnity, the solemnity of a royal nuptial, Matt. xxii. 2.—xxv. 1. We have no reason to think it has any reference to Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter; if I thought it had reference to any other than the mystical marriage between Christ and his church, I would rather apply it to some of David's marriages, because he was a man of war, such an one as the bridegroom here is described to be, which Solomon was not: But I take it to be purely and only meant of Jesus Christ; of him speaketh the prophet this, of him and of no other man; and to him, *ver. 6, 7, it is applied in the New Testament, Heb. i. 8. nor can it be understood of any other. The preface speaks the excellency of the song, ver. 1. The psalm speaks, 1. Of the royal bridegroom who is Christ. (1.) The transcendent excellency of his person, ver. 2. (2.) The glory of his victories, ver. 3—5. (3.) The righteousness of his government, ver. 6, 7. (4.) The splendour of his court, ver. 8, 9. 2. Of the royal bride, which is the church. (1.) Her consent gained, ver. 10, 11. (2.) The nuptials solemnized, ver. 12—15. (3.) The issue of this marriage, ver. 16, 17. In singing the psalm our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of Christ, with an entire submission to, and satisfaction in, his government, and an earnest desire of the enlarging and perpetuating of his church in the world.**

¶ To the chief musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves.

1. **M**Y heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. 2. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever. 3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty: with thy glory and thy majesty. 4. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. 5. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

Some make Shoshannim in the title, to signify an instrument of six strings; others take it in its primitive signification for lilies or roses, which, probably, were strewed, with other flowers, at nuptial solemnities; and then it is easily applicable to Christ, who calls himself the *rose of Sharon*, and the *lily of the valleys*, Cant. ii. 1. It is a song of loves, concerning the holy love that is between Christ and his church. It is a *song of the well-beloved*, the virgins, the companions of the bride, *ver. 14. prepared to be sung by them; the virgin-company that attend the Lamb on mount Zion, are said to sing a new song, Rev. xiv. 3, 4.*

The preface, *ver. 1. speaks, (1.) The dignity of the subject. It is a good matter, and it is pity such a moving art as poetry should ever be employed about a bad matter. It is touching the King, king Jesus, and his kingdom and government. Note, Those that speak of Christ, speak of a good matter, no subject so noble, so copious, so fruitful, so profitable, and so well-becoming us; it is a shame that this good matter is not more the matter of our discourse. (2.) The excellency of the management; this song was a confession with the mouth of faith in the heart, concerning Christ and his church. The matter was well digested, as it well-deserved, *My heart is inditing it*; which, perhaps, is meant of that spirit of prophecy that dictated the psalm to David: that Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, 1 *Pet. i. 11.* But it is applicable to his devout meditations and affections in his heart, out of the abundance of which his mouth spake. Things concerning Christ ought to be thought of by us with all possible seriousness, with fixedness of thought, and a fire of holy love; especially when we are to speak of those things. We then speak best of Christ and divine things, when we speak from the heart, that which has warned and affected us; and we should never be rash in speaking of the things of Christ, but weigh well before hand what we have to say, lest we speak amiss, See *Eccles. v. 2.* 2. It was well expressed, *I will speak of the things which I have made.* He would express himself, (1.) With all possible clearness, as that did himself understand, and was affected with the things he spoke of. Not, I will speak the things I have heard from others, that is speaking by rote; but the things which I have myself studied. Note, What God has wrought in our souls, as well as what he has wrought for them, we must declare to others, *Pfalm lxxvi. 16.* (2.) With all possible cheerfulness, freedom and fluency; *My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer*, guided by my heart in every word, as the pen is by the hand. We call the prophets the penmen of scripture, whereas really they were but the pen. The tongue of the most subtle disputant, and the most eloquent orator, is but the pen with which God writes what he pleaseth. Why should we quarrel with the pen if bitter things be written against us; or idolize the pen, if it write in our favour? David not only spoke what*

he thought of Christ, but wrote it, that it might spread the farther and last the longer. His tongue was as the pen of a ready writer that lets nothing slip. When the heart is inditing a good matter, it is pity but the tongue should be as the pen of a ready writer, to leave it upon record.

In these verses the Lord Jesus is presented, 1. As most beautiful and amiable in himself. It is a marriage song, and therefore the transcendent excellencies of Christ are represented by the beauty of the royal bridegroom, *ver. 2. Thou art fairer than the children of men*, than any of them.

He proposed, *ver. 1. to speak of the king*, but immediately directs his speech to him. They that have an admiration and affection for Christ, love to go to him and tell him so. Thus we must profess our faith that we see his beauty, and our love that we are pleased with it. *Thou art fair, thou art fairer than the children of men*, Note, Jesus Christ is in himself, and in the eyes of all believers, more amiable and lovely than the children of men. The beauties of the Lord Jesus, as God, as Mediator, far surpass those of the human nature in general, and those which the most amiable and excellent of the children of men are endowed with; there is more in Christ to engage our love, than there is or can be in any creature. Our beloved is more than another beloved. The beauties of this lower world and its charms, are in danger of drawing away our hearts from Christ, and therefore we are concerned to understand how much he excelleth them all, and how much more worthy he is of our love.

2. As the great favourite of heaven. He is fairer than the children of men, for God hath done more for him than for any of the children of men, and all his kindness to the children of men is for his sake, and passeth through his hands, through his mouth. (1.) He hath grace, and he has it for us; *grace is poured into thy lips*. By his word, his promise, his gospel, the good will of God is made known to us, and the good work of God is begun and carried on in us. He received all grace from God, all the endowments that were requisite to qualify him for his work and office as Mediator, that from his fulness we might receive, *John i. 16.* It was not only poured into his heart for his own strength and encouragement, but poured into his lips, that by the words of his mouth in general, and the kisses of his mouth to particular believers, he might communicate both holiness and comfort. From this grace poured into his lips proceed those gracious words which all admired, *Luke iv. 22.* The gospel of grace is poured into his lips for it began to be spoken by the Lord, and from him we receive it, he hath the words of eternal life. *The spirit of prophecy is put into thy lips: So the Chaldee.* (2.) He hath the blessing, and he has it for us. Therefore, because thou art the great trustee of divine grace for the use and benefit of the children of men, therefore God has blessed thee for ever, i. e. has made thee an everlasting blessing, so as that in thee all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Where God gives his grace, he will give his blessing, we are blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, *Eph. i. 3.*

3. As victorious over all his enemies. The royal bridegroom is a man of war, and his nuptials do not excuse him from the field of battle; (as was allowed by the law, *Deut. xxiv. 5.*) nay, they bring him to the field of battle, for he is to rescue his spouse by dint of sword out of her captivity; to conquer her, and to conquer for her, and then to marry her. Now we have here,

1. His preparation for war, *ver. 3. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty.* The word of God is the sword of the Spirit: by the promises of that word, and the grace contained in those promises, souls are made willing to submit to Jesus Christ, and become his loyal subjects; and by the threatenings of that word and the judgments executed according to them; those that stand it out against Christ will in due time be brought down and ruined. By the gospel of Christ many Jews and Gentiles were converted, and at length the Jewish nation was destroyed, according to the prediction of it, for their implacable enmity to it; and paganism was quite abolished. The sword here girt on Christ's thigh, is the same which is said to proceed out of his mouth, *Rev. xix. 15.* When the gospel was sent forth to be preached to all nations, then our Redeemer girt his sword upon his thigh.

2. His expedition to this holy war. *He goes forth with his glory and his majesty*, as a great king takes the field with abundance of pomp and magnificence. His sword, his glory, and majesty, in his gospel he appears transcendently great and excellent, bright and blessed, in the honour and majesty which the Father has laid upon him. Christ, both in his person and in his gospel, had nothing of external glory or majesty, nothing to charm men, for he had no form or comeliness, nothing to awe men, for he took upon him the form of a servant; but it was all spiritual glory, spiritual majesty. There is so much grace and therefore glory in that word, *He that believes shall be saved*; so much terror, and therefore majesty, in that word, *He that believes not shall be damned*; that we may well say, in the chariot of that gospel which these words are the sum of, the Redeemer rides forth in glory and majesty. *In thy majesty ride prosperously*, *ver. 4. Prosper thou; ride thou*; this speaks the promise of his Father, that he should prosper according to the good pleasure of the Lord; that he should divide the spoil for the strong, in recompence of his sufferings. Those cannot but prosper to whom God saith, *Prosper*, *Isa. lii. 10, 11, 12.* And it speaks the good wishes of his friends, praying that he may prosper in the conversion of souls to him, and the destruction of all the powers of darkness that rebel against him. *Thy kingdom come. Go on and prosper.*

3. The glorious cause in which he is engaged, *because of truth and meekness and righteousness*, which were in a manner sunk and lost among men, and which Christ came to retrieve and rescue. (1.) The gospel itself is truth, meekness and righteousness: it commands by the power of truth and righteousness; for christianity has these incontestably on its side, and yet it is to be promoted by meekness and gentleness, 1 *Cor. iv. 12, 13.* 2 *Tim. ii. 25.* (2.) Christ appears in it, in his truth, meekness and righteousness; and these are his glory and majesty, and because of these he shall prosper. Men are brought to believe on him because he is truth, to learn of him because he is meek: (*Matt. xi. 29.*) the gentleness of Christ is a thing of mighty force, 2 *Cor. x. 1.* and to submit to him because he is righteous, and rules with equity. (3.) The gospel, as far as it prevails with men, sets up in their hearts truth, meekness and righteousness, rectifies their mistake by the light of truth, controuls their passions by the power of meekness, and governs their hearts and lives by the laws of righteousness. Christ came, by setting up his kingdom among men, to restore those glories to a degenerate world, and to maintain the cause of those just and rightful rulers under him, that by error, malice and iniquity had been deposed.

4. The success of his expedition. *Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things*, i. e. thou shalt experience a wonderful divine power going along with thy gospel to make it victorious; and the effects of it will be terrible things. (1.) In order to the conversion and reduction of souls to him; there are terrible things to be done; the heart must be pricked, conscience must be startled, and the terrors of the Lord must make way for his consolations: this is done by the right hand of Christ. The Comforter shall continue, *John xxi. 8.* (2.) In the conquest of the gates of hell, and its supporters, in the destruction of Judaism and Paganism, terrible things will be done; which will make mens hearts fail them for fear, *Luke xxi. 26.* and great men



and chief captains call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, Rev. vi. 15. The next verse describes these terrible things; ver. 5. *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies.* (1.) Those that were by nature enemies are thus wounded, in order to their being reduced and reconciled. Convictions are like the arrows of the bow, which are sharp on the heart on which they fasten, and bring people to fall under Christ, in subjection to his laws and government. They that thus fall on this stone shall be broken, *Matth. xxi. 44.* (2.) Those that persist in their enmity are thus wounded, in order to their being ruined. The arrows of God's terrors are sharp in their hearts, whereby they shall fall under him so as to be made his footstool, *Psalms cx. 1.* Those that would not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him, *Luke xix. 27.* that would not submit to his golden sceptre, shall be broken to pieces by his iron rod.

6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 8. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad. 9. Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

We have here the royal bridegroom filling his throne with judgment and keeping his court with splendor.

1. He here fills his throne with judgment. It is God the Father, that saith to the Son here, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*; as appears *Heb. i. 8, 9.* where this is quoted to prove that he is God, and has a more excellent name than the angels. The Mediator is God, else he had neither been able to do the Mediator's work, nor fit to wear the Mediator's crown. Concerning his government observe,

(1.) The eternity of it; *it is for ever and ever.* It shall continue on earth throughout all the ages of time, in despite of all the opposition of the gates of hell; and in the blessed fruits and consequences of, it shall last as long as the days of heaven, and run parallel with the line of eternity itself. And perhaps, even then the glory of the Redeemer, and the blessedness of the redeemed, shall be in a continual infinite progression; for it is promised that not only of his government, but of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, *Isa. ix. 7.* even then when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, *1 Cor. xv. 24.* the throne of the Redeemer will continue.

(2.) The equity of it: *The sceptre of thy kingdom*, i. e. the administration of thy government is right, exactly according to the eternal council and will of God, which is the eternal rule and reason of good and evil; and whatever Christ doth, he doth none of his subjects any wrong, but rights those that do suffer wrong; *He loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness*, ver. 7. He himself loves to do righteousness, and hates to do wickedness; and he loves those that do righteousness, and hates those that do wickedness: by the holiness of his life, the merit of his death, and the great design of his gospel, he has made it to appear that he loves righteousness; for by his example, his satisfaction, and his precepts, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness; and that he hates wickedness, for never did God's hatred of sin appear so as it did in the sufferings of Christ.

(3.) The establishment and elevation of it. *Therefore God, even thy God*, (Christ, as mediator, called God, *his God*, *John xx. 17.* as commissioned by him, and the head of those that are taken into covenant with him) he has anointed thee with the oil of gladness: therefore, i. e. (1.) In order to this righteous government of thine, God hath given thee his Spirit, that divine unction to qualify thee for thine undertaking, *Isa. lxi. 1.* *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because he has anointed me.* What God called him to, he fitted him for, *Isa. xi. 2.* The Spirit is called the oil of gladness, because of the delight wherein Christ was filled in carrying on his undertaking. He was anointed with the Spirit above all his fellows, i. e. above all those that were anointed whether priests or kings. (2.) In recompence of what thou hast done and suffered for the advancement of righteousness, and the destruction of sin, God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness, i. e. has brought thee to all the honours and all the joys of thine exalted state; *because he humbled himself, God has highly exalted him*, *Phil. ii. 8, 9.* His anointing him, notes the power and glory to which he is exalted; he is invested in all the dignities and authorities of the Messiah: and his anointing him with the oil of gladness, notes the joy that was set before him (so his exaltation is expressed, *Heb. xii. 2.*) both in the light of his Father's countenance, *Acts ii. 28.* and in the success of his undertaking, which he shall see and be satisfied, *Isa. liii. 11.* This he is anointed with above all his fellows, i. e. above all believers who are his brethren, and who partake of the anointing; but they by measure, he without measure. But the apostle brings it to prove his pre-eminence above the angels, *Heb. i. 4-9.* The salvation of sinners is the joy of angels, *Luke xv. 10.* but much more of the Son.

2. He keeps his court with splendor and magnificence.

(1.) His robes of state, wherein he appears, are taken notice of, not for their pomp, which might strike an awe upon the spectator, but their pleasantness, and the gratefulness of the odours with which they were perfumed, ver. 8. *They smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, compounding the oil of gladness*, with which he and his garments were anointed: these were some of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil which God appointed, the like to which was not to be made up for any common use, *Exod. xxx. 23, 24.* which was typical of the unction of the Spirit, which Christ the great high priest of our profession received, and to which therefore there seems here to be a reference. It is the favour of these good ointments, his graces and comforts, that draws souls to him, *Cant. i. 3, 4.* and makes him precious to believers, *1 Pet. ii. 7.*

(2.) His royal palaces are said to be ivory ones, such as were then reckoned most magnificent. We read of an ivory house that Ahab made, *1 Kings xxi. 39.* The mansions of light above are the ivory palaces, whence all the joys both of Christ and believers come, and where they will be for ever in perfection; for by them he is made glad, and all that are his with him; for they shall enter into the joy of the Lord.

(3.) The beauties of his court shine very bright. In public appearances at court, when the pomp of it is shewed, nothing is supposed to contribute so much to it as the splendor of the ladies, which is alluded to here, ver. 9.

(1.) Particular believers are here compared to the ladies at court, richly dressed in honour of the sovereign. *Kings' daughters are among the honourable women*, whose looks and mien, and ornaments, we may suppose by the height of their extraction to excel all others. All true believers are born

from above; they are the children of the King of kings, those attend the throne of the Lord Jesus daily with their prayers and praises, which is really their honour, and he is pleased to reckon it his. The numbering of king's daughters among his honourable women, or maids of honour, intimates that the kings, whose daughters they were, should be tributaries to him, and dependants on him, and would therefore think it a preferment to their daughters to attend him.

(2.) The church in general, constituted of these particular believers, is here compared to the queen herself; the queen consort, which by an everlasting covenant he hath betrothed to himself; she stands at his right hand, near to him, and receiving honour from him, in the richest array, in gold of Ophir, in robes woven with gold thread, or with a gold chain, and other ornaments of gold. This is the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose graces that are her ornaments, are compared to fine linen, clean and white, *Rev. xix. 8.* for their purity: here to gold of Ophir, for their costliness; for as we owe our redemption, so we owe our adorning, not to corruptible things, but to the precious blood of the Son of God.

10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people, and thy father's house: 11. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy lord, and worship thou him. 12. And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift: even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour. 13. The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. 14. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. 15. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. 16. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. 17. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

This latter part of the psalm is addressed to the royal bride, standing on the right hand of the royal bridegroom: God that said to the Son, *Thy throne is for ever and ever*, saith this to the church, whom, upon the account of her espousals to the Son, he here calls his daughter.

He tells her of the duties expected from her, which ought to be considered by all those that come into relation to the Lord Jesus; hearken therefore, and consider this, and incline thine ear, i. e. submit to those conditions of thine espousals, and bring thy will to comply with them. This is the method of profiting by the word of God; *He that has ears let him hear*, let him hearken diligently; he that hearkens let him consider and weigh it duly: he that considers let him incline, and yield to the force of what is laid before him. And what is it that is here required?

(1.) She must renounce all others; *Forget thine own people, and thy Father's house*, according to the law of marriage, retain not the affection thou hast had for them, nor covet to return to them again; banish all such remembrance, not only of thy people that were dear to thee, but of thy father's house that were dearer, as may incline thee to look back, as Lot's wife to Sodom. When Abraham in obedience to God's call had quitted his native soil, he was not so much as mindful of the country from whence he came out. This shews, (1.) How necessary it was for those who were converted from Judaism or Paganism to the faith of Christ, wholly to cast out the old leaven, and not to bring into their Christian profession, either the Jewish ceremonies or the heathen idolatries, for these would make such a mongrel of religion in christianity as the Samaritans had. (2.) How necessary it is for us all when we give up our names to Jesus Christ to hate father and mother, and all that is dear to us in this world, in comparison, i. e. to love them less than Christ and his honour, and our interest in him, *Luke xiv. 26.*

And here is very good encouragement given to the royal bride, thus entirely to break off from her former alliances, *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty*; which intimates, that the mixing of her old rites and customs, whether Jewish or Gentile, with her religion, would blemish her beauty, and would be in danger of losing her interest in the affections of the royal bridegroom: but if she entirely conform to his will, he would delight in her; the beauty of holiness, both on the church and on particular believers, is in the sight of Christ of great price and very amiable. Where that is, he saith, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.* Among the golden candlesticks he walks with pleasure, *Rev. ii. 1.*

(2.) She must reverence him, must love, honour and obey him, *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him.* The church is to be subject to Christ, as the wife to the husband, *Eph. v. 24.* to call him Lord, as Sarah called Abraham, and to obey him, *1 Pet. iii. 6.* and so not only to submit to his government, but to give him divine honours; we must worship him as God, and our Lord; for this is the will of God that *all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*; nay, in so doing, it is reckoned that they honour the Father; if we confess that Christ is Lord, and pay our homage to him accordingly, it is to the glory of God the Father, *Phil. ii. 11.*

2. He tells her of the honours designed for her.

1. Great court should be made to her, and rich presents brought her, ver. 12. *The daughter of Tyre*, a rich and splendid city, the daughter of the king of Tyre shall be there with a gift; every royal family round about shall send a branch as a representative of the whole, to seek thy favour, and to make an interest in thee; *even the rich among the people*, whose wealth might be thought to discharge them from dependance at court, yet they shall entreat thy favour, for his sake, to whom thou art espoused, that by thee they may make him their friend; the Jews, the pretending Jews, who are rich to a proverb (as rich as a Jew) shall come and worship before the church's feet in the Philadelphia period, and shall know that Christ has loved her, *Rev. iii. 9.* When the Gentiles being converted to the faith of Christ, join themselves to the church, they then come with a gift, *2 Cor. viii. 5.* Rom. xv. 16. When with themselves they devote all they have to the honour of Christ, and the service of his kingdom they then come with a gift.

2. She shall be very splendid and highly esteemed in the eyes of all, (1.) For her personal qualifications, the endowments of her mind, which every one shall admire, ver. 13. *The king's daughter is all glorious within.* Note, the glory of the church is spiritual glory, and that is indeed all glory; it is the glory of the soul; and that is the man; it is glory in God's sight, and it is an earnest of eternal glory. The glory of the saints falls not within the ken of a carnal eye; as their life, so their glory is hid with Christ in God



neither can the natural man know it, for it is spiritually discerned; but those who so discern it highly value it. Let us see here what is that true glory which we should be ambitious of, not that which makes a fair show in the flesh, but which is in the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, 1 Pet. iii. 4. *Whose praise is not of men but of God*, Rom. ii. 29. (2.) For her rich apparel; though all her glory is within, that for which she is truly valuable, yet her clothing also is of wrought gold: the conversation of christians, in which they appear in the world, must be enriched with good works, not gay and gaudy ones, like paint and flourish, but substantially good, like gold; and it must be accurate and exact, like wrought gold, which is worked with a great deal of care and caution.

3. Her nuptials shall be celebrated with a great deal of honour and joy, ver. 14, 15. *She shall be brought to the king*, as the Lord God brought the woman to the man, Gen. ii. 22. which was a type of this mystical marriage between Christ and his church. None are brought to Christ but whom the Father brings, and he has undertaken to do it, so brought to the king, ver. 14. as to enter into the king's palace, ver. 15. Which intimates a two fold bringing of the spouse to Christ. (1.) In the conversion of souls to Christ; then they are espoused to him, privately contracted, as chaste virgins, 2 Cor. xi. 2. Rom. vii. 4. (2.) In the completing of the mystical body, and the glorification of all the saints at the end of time. Then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be made completely ready, when all that belongs to the election of grace shall be called in, and called home, and all gathered together to Christ, 2 Thess. ii. 1. Then is the marriage of the Lamb come, Rev. xix. 7. xxi. 2. and the virgins go forth to meet the bridegroom, Matt. xxv. 1. Then they shall enter into the king's palaces, into the heavenly mansions, to be ever with the Lord. In both these espousals observe to the honour of the royal bride: (1.) Her wedding-clothes, raiment of needle-work, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of the Spirit; both curiously wrought by divine wisdom. (2.) Her bride-maids, the virgins her companions, the wise virgins, that have oil in their vessels as well as in their lamps, those that being joined to the church cleave to it and follow it, these shall go in to the marriage. (3.) The mirth with which the nuptials will be celebrated; *with gladness and rejoicing shall she be brought*; when the prodigal is brought home to his father; *it is meet that we shall make merry and be glad*, Luke xv. 32. and when the marriage of the Lamb is come; *let us be glad and rejoice*, Rev. xix. 7. For the day of his espousals, is the day of the gladness of his heart, Cant. iii. 10.

4. The progeny of this marriage shall be illustrious, ver. 26. *Instead of thy father's shall be thy children*. Instead of the Old Testament church, the economy of which was waxen old, and ready to vanish away, Heb. viii. 13. as the fathers that are going off, there shall be a New Testament church, a Gentile church, that shall be grafted into the same olive, and partake of its root and fatness, Rom. xi. 17. more and more eminent shall be the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, Isa. liv. 1. This promise to Christ is of the same import with that, Isa. liv. 10. *He shall see his seed*; and these shall be made princes in all the earth, i. e. there shall be some of all nations brought into subjection to Christ, and so made princes, made to our God kings and priests, Rev. i. 6. Or it may intimate, that there should be a much greater number of Christian kings than ever there was of Jewish kings; those in Canaan only, these in all the earth; nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the church, which shall suck the breasts of kings. They are princes of Christ's making, for by him kings reign and princes decree justice.

5. The praise of this marriage shall be perpetual, in the praises of the royal bridegroom, ver. 18. *I will make thy name to be remembered*. His Father has given him a name above every name, and here promiseth to make it perpetual, by keeping up a succession of ministers and christians in every age that should bear up his name, which shall thus endure for ever, Psal. lxxii. 17. by being remembered in all the generations of time, for the entail of christianity shall not be cut off. Therefore, because they shall remember thee in all generations, they shall praise thee for ever and ever. They that help to support the honour of Christ on earth shall in heaven see his glory, and share in it, and be for ever praising him. In the believing hope of our everlasting happiness in the other world, let us always keep up the remembrance of Christ, as our only way thither, in our generation; and in assurance of the perpetuating of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, let us transmit the remembrance of him to succeeding generations; that his name may endure for ever, and be as the days of heaven.

P S A L M XLVI.

*This psalm encourageth us to hope and trust in God, and his power and providence, and gracious presence with his church in the worst of times, and direct us to give him the glory of what he has done for us, and what he will do: probably it was penned upon occasion of David's victories over the neighbour nations, 2 Sam. viii. and the rest which God gave him from all his enemies round about. We are here taught, (1.) To take comfort in God when things look very black and threatening, ver. 1—5. (2.) To mention to his praise the great things he has wrought for his church against its enemies, ver. 6—9. (3.) To assure ourselves that God who hath glorified his own name, will glorify it yet again, and to comfort ourselves with that, ver. 10, 11. We may in singing it, apply it either to our spiritual enemies, and the encouragement we have to hope that through Christ we shall be more than conquerors over them; or to the public enemies of Christ's kingdom in the world and their threatening insults, endeavouring to preserve a holy security and serenity of mind, when they seem most formidable. It is said of Luther, that when he heard any discouraging news, he would say, Come, let us sing the 46th psalm.*

¶ To the chief musician for the sons of Korah,  
a Song upon Alamoth.

1. **G**OD is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea: 3. Though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. 4. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. 5. God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

The psalmist here teacheth us by his own example,

1. To triumph in God, and his relation to us, and presence with us, especially when we have had some fresh experiences of his appearing on our behalf, ver. 1. *God is our refuge and strength*; we have found him so, he

has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our refuge to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe and think ourselves so: secure upon good ground, Prov. xviii. 10. Are we oppressed by troubles? Have we work to do, and enemies to grapple with? God is our strength, to bear us up under our burdens, to fit us for all our services and sufferings; who will by his grace put strength into us, and on whom we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a help, to do all that for us which we need, a present help, a help found, so the word is, i. e. one whom you have found to be so, a help on which we may write *probatum est*, as Christ is called a *tried stone*, Isa. xxviii. 16. Or a help at hand, that is never to seek, but is always ready to be found of us; or a help sufficient, a help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present help, we cannot desire a better help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.

2. To triumph over the greatest danger. *God is our strength and our help*, a God all-sufficient to us, *Therefore will not we fear*. Those that with a holy reverence fear God, need not with any amazement to be afraid of the power of hell or earth? *If God be for us, who can be against us*, to do us any harm? It is our duty, it is our privilege, to be thus fearless; it is an evidence of a clear conscience, of an honest heart, and of a lively faith in God, and his providence and promise; *We will not fear though the earth be removed*, though all our creature confidence fails us, and sinks us, nay, though that which should support us threaten to swallow us up, as the earth did Korah, for whose sons this psalm was penned, and some think by them, yet while we keep close to God, and have him for us, we will not fear, for we have no cause to fear: *Et si fractus illabatur orbis, Impavidum serient ruinae*. Hor. Observe here,

1. How threatening the danger is. We will suppose the earth to be removed, and thrown into the sea, even the mountains, the strongest and firmest parts of the earth, to lie buried in the unfathomed ocean; we will suppose the sea to roar and rage, and make a dreadful noise, and its forming billows to insult the shore with so much violence as even to shake the mountains, ver. 3. Though kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments in continual revolution; though their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point; yet will not we fear, knowing that all these troubles will end well for the church. See Psalm xciii. 4. If the earth be removed, those have reason to fear that have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their heart upon it; but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who then can expect to be most happy, when the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters, who build their confidence on such a floating foundation, but not those who are led to the rock that is higher than they, and find firm footing upon that rock.

2. How well grounded the defiance of this danger is, considering how well-guarded the church is, and that interest which we are concerned for. It is not any private particular concern of our own that we are in pain about; no, it is the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High: it is the ark of God for which our hearts tremble; But when we consider what God hath provided for the comfort and safety of his church, we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings. Here is,

1. Joy to the church even in the most melancholy and sorrowful times, ver. 4. *There is a river* the streams whereof shall make it glad, even then when the waters of the sea roar and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which went softly by Jerusalem, Isa. viii. 6, 7. and though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made serviceable to the defence of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time, Isa. xlii. 10, 11. But this here must be understood spiritually: the covenant of grace is the river, the promises of which are the streams: the Spirit of grace is the river, 1 John vii. 38, 39. the comforts of which are the streams that make glad the city of our God. God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a church of broad rivers and streams, Isa. xxxiii. 21. The streams that make glad the city of God, are not rapid, but gentle, like those of Siloam. Note, The spiritual comforts which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to baffle the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world.

2. Establishment to the church; though heaven and earth are shaken, yet God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved, ver. 5. God has assured his church of the special presence with it; and concern for it; his honour is embarked in it, he hath set up his tabernacle in it, and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved, i. e. (1.) Not destroyed, nor removed as the earth may be, ver. 2. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when it is in ruins. It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (2.) Not disturbed, not much moved with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us.

3. Deliverance to the church, though its dangers be very great; God shall help her, and who then can hurt her? help her under her troubles that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted, the more she shall multiply; God shall help her out of her troubles, and that right early; when the morning appeareth, i. e. very speedily, for he is a present help, ver. 1. and very seasonably; then when things are brought to the last extremity, and when the relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by particular believers themselves; if God be in our hearts, in the midst of us by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped, let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well, and will end well.

6. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. 7. The LORD of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. 8. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. 9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth, he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in funder: he burneth the chariot in the fire. 10. Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. 11. The LORD of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

These verses give glory to God, both as King of nations and as King of saints.

1. As King of nations, ruling the world by his power and providence, and over-ruling all the affairs of the children of men to his own glory; he doth



doth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say, What dost thou?

(1.) He checks the rage, and breaks the power of the nations that oppose him and his interests in the world, *ver. 6.* The heathen raged at David's coming to the throne, and at the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of David, compare, *Psal. ii. 1, 2.* The kingdoms were moved, with indignation, and rose in a tumultuous furious manner to oppose it; but God uttered his voice, spake to them in his wrath, and they were moved in another sense, they were struck into confusion and consternation, put into disorder, and all their measures broke, the earth, itself melted under them, so that they found no firm footing, their earthly hearts failed them for fear, and dissolved like snow before the sun: Such a colliquation of the spirits of the enemies is described, *Judg. v. 4, 5.* and see *Luke xxi. 25, 26.*

(2.) When he pleaseth to draw his sword, and gave it commission, he can make great havock among the nations, and lay all waste, *ver. 8.* Come, behold the works of the Lord, they are to be observed, *Psal. lxxvi. 5.* and to be sought out, *Psal. cxi. 2.* All the operations of providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly, take notice of the desolations he hath made in the earth, among the enemies of his church, who thought to have laid the land of Israel desolate. The destruction they designed to bring upon the church, has been turned upon themselves. War is a tragedy which commonly destroys the stage it is acted on; David carried the war into the enemies country; and O what desolations did it make there? cities were burnt, countries laid waste, armies of men cut off and laid in heaps upon heaps; come and see the effects of desolating judgments; and stand in awe of God; say, *How terrible art thou in thy works?* *Psal. lxxvi. 3.* Let all that oppose him see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear him, and trust in him, see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the church. Let them gird themselves, but they shall be broken to pieces.

(3.) When he pleaseth to sheathe his sword, he puts an end to the wars of the nations, and crowns them with peace, *ver. 9.* War and peace depend on his word and will, as much as storms and calms at sea do, *Psal. cxvii. 25—29.* He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; sometimes in pity to the nations, that they may have a breathing time, when, by long wars with each other, they have run themselves out of breath; both sides perhaps are weary of the war, and willing to let it fall: expedients are found out for accommodation; martial princes are removed, and peace-makers set in their room; and then the bow is broken by consent, the spear cut asunder and turned into a pruning-hook, and the sword beaten into a plough-share; and the chariots of war burned, there being no more occasion for them; or rather it may be meant of what he doth at other times in favour of his own people. He maketh those wars to cease that were waged against them, and designed for their ruin. He breaks the enemies bow that was drawn against them; no weapon forced against Zion shall prosper; *Isa. liv. 17.* The total destruction of Gog and Magog is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war, *Ezek. xxxix. 9, 10.* which intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace, which made it needless to lay up those weapons of war for their own service. The bringing of a long war to a good issue is a work of the Lord, which we ought to behold with wonder and thankfulness.

2. As king of saints, and as such we must own that great and marvellous are his works, *Rev. xv. 3.*

He doth and will do great things,

1. For his own glory, *ver. 10.* Be still and know that I am God. (1.) Let his enemies be still and threaten no more, but know it to their terror, that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that will certainly be too hard for them, let them rage no more, for it is all in vain, he that sits in heaven, laughs at them; and, in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour, he will be exalted among the heathen, and not only among his own people, he will be exalted in the earth, and not only in the church. Men will set up themselves, will have their own way, and do their own will, but let them know that God will be exalted, he will have his way; will do his own will, will glorify his own name, and wherein they deal proudly, he will be above them, and make them know that he is so. (2.) Let his own people be still, let them be calm and sedate, and tremble no more, but know to their comfort that the Lord is God, he is God alone and will be exalted above the heathen; let him alone to maintain his honour, to fulfil his own counsels, and to support his own interest in the world. Though we be depressed, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us, he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, Father, glorify thy name, we ought to act faith upon the answer given to that prayer, when Christ himself prayed it; I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again. Amen, Lord, so be it.

2. For his people's safety and protection. He triumphs in the former, I will be exalted, they triumph in this, *ver. 7.* and again, *ver. 11.* It is the burden of the song, The Lord of hosts is with us, he is on our side, he takes our part, is present with us, and president over us, and the God of Jacob is our refuge to whom we may flee, and in whom we may confide and be sure of safety. Let all believers triumph in this. (1.) They have the presence of a God of power, of all power. The Lord of hosts is with us. God is the Lord of hosts, for he has all the creatures which are called the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them, as the instruments either of his justice or of his mercy. This sovereign Lord is with us, sides with us, acts with us, and has promised me he will never leave us. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them if the Lord of hosts be with us. (2.) They are under the protection of a God in covenant; who not only is able to help them, but is engaged in honour and faithfulness to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob; and he is our refuge, by whom we are sheltered, and in whom we are satisfied, who by his providence secures our welfare, when without are lightings; and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establisheth them, when within are fears. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob has been, is, and will be, with us; has been, is, and will be our refuge; the original includes all; and well may Selah be added to it: Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, If God be for us, who can be against us?

P S A L M XLVII.

The scope of this psalm is to stir us up to praise God, to stir up all people to do it; and (1.) We are directed in what manner to do it, publicly, cheerfully and intelligently, *ver. 1, 6, 7.* (2.) We are furnished with matter for praise. (1.) God's majesty, *ver. 2.* (2.) His sovereign and universal dominion, *ver. 2, 7, 8, 9.* (3.) The great things he had done and would do for his people, *ver. 3, 4, 5.* Many suppose that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the bringing up of the ark to mount

Sion, which *ver. 5.* seems to refer to; God is gone up with a shout; but it looks further to the ascension of Christ into the heavenly Zion, after he had finished his undertaking on earth, and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world, to which the heathen should become willing subjects. In singing this psalm we are to give honour to the exalted Redeemer, to rejoice in his exaltation, and to celebrate his praises, confessing that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

¶ To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. O CLAP your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph: 2. For the LORD most High is terrible: he is a great King over all the earth. 3. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. 4. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

The psalmist having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all about him in the blessed work of praise; as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others backwardness to and barrenness in this work. Observe in these verses,

1. Who are called upon to praise God; all ye people, all ye people of Israel; those were his own subjects, and under his charge, and therefore he will engage them to praise God, for on them he has an influence. Whatever others do, he and his house, he and his people, shall praise the Lord. Or, all ye people and nations of the earth; and so it may be taken as a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church, see *Rom. xv. 11.*

2. What they are called upon to do; O clap your hands, in token of your own joy and satisfaction in what God has done for you; of your approbation, nay, your admiration, of what God has done in general; and of your indignation against all the enemies of God's glory, *Job xxvii. 23.* Clap your hands, as men transported with pleasure, that cannot contain themselves; shout unto God, not to make him hear, his ear is not heavy, but to make all about you hear, and take notice how much you are affected and filled with the works of God. Shout with the voice of triumph in him, and in his power and goodness, that others may join with you in the triumph. Note, Such expressions of pious and devout affections as to come may seem indecent and imprudent; yet ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed, because, if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection, and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.

3. What is suggested to us as matter for our praise.

1. That the God with whom we have to do, is a God of awful majesty, *ver. 2.* The Lord most High is terrible. He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest; there are those perfections in him that are to be revered by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with him.

2. That he is a God of sovereign and universal dominion; he is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power; a King over all the earth, all the creatures being made by him, are subject to him, and therefore he is a great king: the King of kings.

3. That he takes a particular care of his people and their concerns, has done so, and ever will:

1. In the giving them victory and success, *ver. 3.* Subduing people, and nations under them, both those that stood in their way, *Psal. xlv. 2.* and those that made attempts upon them. This God had done for them, witness the planting of them in Canaan, and their continuance there unto this day. This they doubted not but he would still do for them by his servant David, who prospered which way soever he turned his victorious arms; but this looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles. He shall bring them in as sheep into the fold, so the word signifies, not for slaughter but for preservation. He shall subdue their affections, and make them a willing people in the day of his power; shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and reduce them which had gone astray under the conduct of the great shepherd and bishop of souls, *1 Pet. ii. 25.*

2. In giving them rest and settlement, *ver. 4.* He shall choose an inheritance for us; He had chosen the land of Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel, it was the land which the Lord their God spied out for them, see *Deut. xxxii. 8.* This justified their possession of that land, and gave them a good title; and this sweetened their enjoyment of it, and made it comfortable; they had reason to think it a happy lot, and to be satisfied in it, when it was that which infinite wisdom chose for them. And the setting up of God's sanctuary in it, made it the excellency, the honour of Jacob. *Amos vi. 8.* and he chose so good an inheritance for Jacob, because he loved him, *Deut. vii. 8.* Apply this spiritually, and it speaks, (1.) The happiness of the saints, that God himself had chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a goodly heritage: he has chosen it who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy, and he has chosen so well, that he himself has undertaken to be the inheritance of his people, *Psal. xvi. 5.* and he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, *1 Pet. i. 4.* This will be indeed the excellency of Jacob, whom because he loved, he prepared for them such a happiness as eye has not seen. (2.) The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, God shall choose my inheritance for me; let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment. He knows what is good for me better than I do for myself, and therefore I will have no will of my own but what is resolved into his.

5. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. 6. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. 7. For God is the king of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding. 8. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. 9. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God, and to sing his praises; so backward are we to this duty, that we have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line; so we are here, *ver. 6.* Sing praises to God, and again, sing praises: sing praises to our King, and again sing praises,



*praises.* This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent and abundant in; we may sing praises again and again in the same words, and it is no vain repetition, if it be done with new affections. Should not a people praise their God? (*Dan. v. 4.*) Should not subjects praise their king? God is our God; our King, and therefore we must praise him; we must sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them, and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule subjoined, *ver. 7. Sing ye praises with understanding, with Maschil.* (1.) Intelligently; as those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God, and what is the meaning of the service: This is the gospel rule, *1 Cor. xiv. 15. To sing with the spirit and with the understanding also*; it is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, *Eph. v. 19.* It is not an acceptable service, if it be not a reasonable service. (2.) Instructively, as those that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him.

Three things are mentioned in these verses as just matter for our praises, and each of them will admit of a double sense:

1. We must praise God, going up, *ver. 5. God is gone up with a shout*; which may refer, (1.) To the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity, David himself dancing before it; the priests, it is likely, blowing the trumpets, and the people following with their loud huzzas. The ark being the instituted token of God's special presence with them, when that was brought up by warrant from him, he might be said to go up; and the emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more publick and solemn administration of them, it is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in and give thanks for. (2.) To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven, when he had finished his work on earth, *Acts i. 9.* Then *God went up with a shout*, the shout of a king, of a conqueror, as one that having *spoiled principalities and powers, then led captivity captive*, *Psal. lxxviii. 18.* He went up a Mediator typified by the ark and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was into the most holy place, *i. e. into heaven itself*, see *Heb. ix. 24.* We read not of a shout, or the sound of a trumpet at the ascension of Christ, but they were the inhabitants of the upper world, those sons of God that then shouted for joy, *Job xxxvii. 7.* He shall come again in the same manner as he went, *Acts i. 11.* and we are sure he shall come again with a shout and the sound of a trumpet.

2. We must praise God reigning, *ver. 7, 8. God is not only our king, and therefore we owe our homage to him, but he is King of all the earth, ver. 7. over all the kings of the earth, and therefore, in every place, the incense of praise is to be offered up to him.* Now this may be understood, (1.) Of the kingdom of providence; God, as Creator, and the God of nature, *reigns over the heathen*, disposeth of them, and all their affairs as he pleaseth, though they know him not, nor have any regard to him. *He sits upon the throne of his holiness*, which he hath prepared in the heavens, and there he ruleth over all even over the heathen, serving his own purposes by them and upon them. See here the extent of God's government; all are born within his allegiance; even the heathen that serve other gods yet are ruled by the true God, our God, whether they will or no. See the equity of his government. It is a throne of holiness on which he sits, whence he gives warrants, orders, and judgments, in which we are sure there is no iniquity. (2.) Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose *throne is for ever and ever, reigns over the heathen*, not only he is entrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes that were bred up in heathenism, *Eph. ii. 12, 13.* This the apostle speaks of as a great mystery, that the *Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, *Eph. iii. 6.* Christ *sits upon the throne of his holiness*, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are intended to shew forth God's holiness, and to advance holiness among the children of men.

3. We must praise God, as *attended and honoured by the princes of the people*, *ver. 9.* This may be understood, (1.) Of the congress or convention of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes to the solemn feasts, or to dispatch the public business of the nation. It was the power of Israel that they were the *people of the God of Abraham*, as they were Abraham's seed, and taken into his covenant; and thanks be to God, this blessing of Abraham is come upon the isles of the Gentiles, *Gal. iii. 14.* It was their happiness that they had a settled government, *princes of their people*, who were the *shields of their land*; magistracy is the shield of a nation, and it is a great mercy to any people to have this shield; especially when their princes, *their shields, belong unto the Lord*, are devoted to his honour, and their power is employed in his service, for then he is greatly exalted. It is likewise the honour of God, that in another sense the *shields of the earth, do belong to him*, magistracy is his institution, and he serves his own purposes by it in the government of the world, turning the hearts of kings as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleaseth. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the public welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation in the things that belong to its peace, is a very happy omen, which promiseth the abundance of blessings. (2.) It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy, that in the days of the Messiah the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the New Jerusalem. That they should all become the *people of the God of Abraham*, to whom it was promised that he should be the father of many nations. The volunteers of the people, so it may be read; it is the same word that is used, *Psal. cx. 3. Thy people shall be willing*; for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing to be his. When the *shields of the earth*, the ensigns of royal dignity, *1 Kings xiv. 27, 28.* are surrendered to the Lord Jesus, as the keys of a city are presented to the conqueror or sovereign; when princes use their power for the advancement of the interests of religion, then Christ is greatly exalted.

# P S A L M XLVIII.

This psalm, as the two former, is a triumphant song; some think it was penned on occasion of Jehoshaphat's victory, *2 Chron. xx.* Others, of the rout given to Sennacherib, when his army laid siege to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time; but for ought I know, it might be penned by David, upon occasion of some eminent victory obtained in his time; yet not so calculated for that, but that it might serve any other the like occasion in aftertimes, and be applicable also to the glories of the gospel church, of which Jerusalem was a type, especially where it shall come to be a church triumphant, the heavenly Jerusalem, *Heb. xii. 22.* The Jerusalem which is above, *Gal. iv. 26.* Jerusalem is here praised, (1.) For its relation to God, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) For God's care of it, *ver. 3.* (3.) For the terror it strikes upon its enemies, *ver. 4—7.* (4.) For the pleasure it gives to its friends, who delight to think, (1.) Of what God has done, doth, and will do for it, *ver. 8.* (2.) Of the gracious discoveries he makes of himself, in and for that holy city, *ver. 9, 10.* (3.) Of

the effectual provision which is made for its safety, *ver. 11—13.* (4.) Of the assurance we have of the perpetuity of God's covenant with the children of Zion, *ver. 14.* In singing this psalm we must be affected with the privilege we have as members of the gospel church, and must express and excite our sincere good will to all its interests.

## ¶ A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. GREAT is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king. 3. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 4. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. 5. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away, 6. Fear took hold upon them there, and pain as of a woman in travail. 7. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east-wind.

The psalmist is designing to praise Jerusalem, and to set forth the grandeur of that city, but he begins with the praises of God, and his greatness, *ver. 1.* and ends with the praises of God, and his goodness, *ver. 14.* For whatever is the subject of our praise, God must be both the Alpha and Omega of them. And particularly whatever is said to the honour of the church, must redound to the honour of the church's God.

What is here said to the honour of Jerusalem, is,

1. That the king of heaven owns it; it is the city of our God, *ver. 1.* which he chose out of all the cities of Israel to put his name there; and of Zion he said kinder things than ever he said of any place upon earth, *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it, Psal. cxxxvii. 13, 14.* It is the city of the great king, *ver. 2.* the King of all the earth, who is pleased to declare himself in a special manner present there. This our Saviour quotes to prove, that to swear by Jerusalem, is profanely to swear by God himself, *Matt. v. 35.* for it is the city of the great King, who has chosen it for the special residence of his grace, as heaven is of his glory.

(1.) It is enlightened with the knowledge of God. In Judah God is known, and his name is great, but especially in Jerusalem, the head quarters of the priests, whose lips were to keep this knowledge. In Jerusalem God is great, *ver. 1.* who in other places was made little of, was made nothing of. Happy the kingdom, the city, the family, the heart in which God is great, in which he is uppermost, in which he is all. There God is known, *ver. 3.* and where he is known he will be great, none condemn God but those that are ignorant of him.

(2.) It is devoted to the honour of God. It is therefore called the mountain of his holiness, for holiness to the Lord is written upon it, and all the furniture of it, *Zech. xiv. 20, 21.* This is the privilege of the church of Christ, that it is a holy nation, a peculiar people; Jerusalem, the type of it, is called the holy city, as bad as it was, *Matt. xxvii. 53.* till that was set up, but never after.

(3.) It is the place appointed for the solemn service and worship of God. There he is greatly praised, and greatly to be praised, *ver. 1.* Note, The clearer discoveries are made to us of God and his greatness, the more it is expected we should abound in his praises. They that from all parts of the country brought their offerings to Jerusalem, had reason to be thankful, that God would not only permit them thus to attend him, but promise to accept them, and meet them with a blessing, and reckon himself praised and honoured by their services. Herein Jerusalem typified the gospel-church, for what little tribute of praise God has from this earth, ariseth from that church upon earth, which is therefore his tabernacle among men.

(4.) It is taken under his special protection, *ver. 3.* He is known for a refuge, *i. e.* He has approved himself such a one, and as such a one he is there applied to by his worshippers. They that know him will trust in him, and seek to him, *Psal. ix. 10.* God was known not only in the streets, but even in the palaces of Jerusalem, for a refuge; the great men had recourse to God, and acquaintance with him. And then religion was likely to flourish in the city, when it reigned in the palaces.

(5.) Upon all these accounts, Jerusalem, and especially mount Zion, on which the temple was built, were universally beloved and admired, *Beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, ver. 2.* The situation must needs be every way agreeable, when infinite wisdom chose it for the place of the sanctuary; and that which made it beautiful was, that it was the mountain of holiness, for there is a beauty in holiness. The earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground which was thus beautified with holiness, be called the joy of the whole earth, *i. e.* what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, that God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth. Mount Zion was on the north-side of Jerusalem, and so was a shelter to the city from the cold and bleak winds that blew from that quarter; or if fair weather was expected out of the north, they were thus directed to look Zion-ward for it.

2. That the kings of the earth were afraid of it. That God was known in their palaces for a refuge, they had had alate instance and a very remarkable one. Whatever it was,

1. They had had but too much occasion to fear their enemies. For the kings were assembled, *ver. 4.* The neighbouring princes were confederate against Jerusalem, their heads and horns, their policies and powers were combined for its ruin; they were assembled with all their forces, they passed, advanced, and marched on together, not doubting but presently to make themselves masters of that city which should have been the joy, but was the envy of the whole earth.

2. God made their enemies to fear them. The very sight of Jerusalem struck them into a consternation, and gave check to their fury; as the sight of the tents of Jacob frightened Balaam from his purpose to curse Israel, *Numb. xxiv. 2.* They saw it and marvelled, and hasted away, *ver. 5.* Not, *veni, vidi, vici*, but, on the contrary, *veni, vidi, victus sum*: Not that there was any thing to be seen in Jerusalem that was so very formidable, but that the sight of it brought to mind what they heard concerning the special presence of God in that city, and the divine protection it was under, and God impressed such terrors upon their minds thereby, as made them retire with precipitation. Though they were kings, though they were many in confederacy, yet they knew themselves an unequal match for omnipotence, and therefore fear came upon them and pain, *ver. 6.* Note, God can dispirit the stoutest of his church's enemies, and soon put them in pain that live at ease. The fright they were in upon the sight of Jerusalem, is here compared to the throes of a woman in travail, which are sharp and grievous, which sometimes come suddenly, *1 Thess. v. 3.* which cannot be avoided, and which are effects of sin and the curse. The defeat hereby



herby given to their designs upon Jerusalem, is compared to the dreadful works made with a fleet of ships by a violent storm, when some are split, others shattered, or dispersed, *ver. 7. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind*; effects at sea lie thus exposed. The terrors of God are compared to an east wind, *Job xxvii. 20, 21. These shall put them into confusion, and break all their measures; Who knows the power of God's anger?*

8. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God, God will establish it for ever. *Selah.* 9. We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. 10. According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness. 11. Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. 12. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. 13. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generations following. 14. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

We have here the good use and improvement which the people of God are taught to make of his late glorious and gracious appearances for them against their enemies, that they might work for their good.

1. Let our faith in the word of God be hereby confirmed. If we compare what God has done with what he has spoken, we shall find, that as we have heard, so have we seen, *ver. 8.* and what we have seen, obliges us to believe what we have heard. (1.) As we have heard done in former providences, in the days of old, so have we seen done in our own days. Note, God's latter appearances for his people against his and their enemies, are consonant to his former appearances, and should put us in mind of them. (2.) As we have heard in the promise and prediction, so we have seen in the performance and accomplishment. We have heard that God is the Lord of hosts, and that Jerusalem is the city of our God, is dear to him, is his particular care, and now we have seen it, we have seen the power of our God, we have seen his goodness, we have seen his care and concern for us, that he is a wall of fire round about Jerusalem, and the glory in the midst of her. Note, In the great things that God has done, and is doing for his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures; and this would help us the better to understand both the providence itself, and the scripture that is fulfilled in it.

2. Let our hope of the stability and perpetuity of the church, be hereby encouraged. From what we have seen, compared with what we have heard in the city of our God, we may conclude, that God will establish it for ever. This was not fulfilled in Jerusalem, that was long since destroyed, and all its glory laid in the dust, but has its accomplishment in the gospel church; we are sure that that shall be established for ever, it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, *Mat. xvi. 18.* God himself has undertaken the establishment of it, it is the Lord that has founded Zion, *Isa. xiv. 32.* And what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, may encourage us to hope in that promise of God, upon which the church is built.

3. Let our minds be hereby filled with the good thoughts of God. From what we have heard, and seen, and hope for, we may take occasion to think much of God's loving kindness, whenever we meet in the midst of his temple, *ver. 9.* All the streams of mercy that flow down to us, must be run up to the fountain of God's loving kindness. It is not owing to any merit of ours, but purely to his mercy, and the peculiar favour he bears to his people. This therefore we must think of with delight, think frequently and fixedly of; what subject can we dwell upon more noble, more pleasant, more profitable? We must have God's loving kindness always before our eyes, *Psal. xxvi. 3.* especially when we attend upon him in his temple. And when we enjoy the benefit of public ordinances undisturbed, we meet in his temple, and there is none to make us afraid, we should take occasion from thence to think of his loving kindness.

4. Let us give to God the glory of the great things which he has done for us, and mention them to his honour, *ver. 10.* According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise, not only in Jerusalem, but to the ends of the earth. By the late signal deliverance of Jerusalem, God had made himself a name, *i. e.* He had gloriously discovered his wisdom, power, and goodness, and made all the nations about sensible of it. And so was his praise, *i. e.* some in all parts would be found giving glory to him accordingly. As far as his name goes; his praise will go, at least it should go, and at length it shall go, when all the ends of the world shall praise him, *Psal. xxi. 27. Rev. xi. 15.* Some by his name understand especially that glorious name of his, the Lord of hosts: according to that name, so is his praise; for all the creatures, even to the ends of the earth, are under his command. But his people must in a special manner acknowledge his justice in all he doth for them; *righteousness fills thy right hand, i. e.* All the operations of thy power are consonant to the eternal rules of equity.

5. Let all the members of the church in particular, take to themselves the comfort of what God doth for his church in general, *ver. 11.* Let mount Zion rejoice, the priests and Levites that attend the sanctuary, and then let all the daughters of Judah, the country towns, and the inhabitants of them be glad; let the women in their songs and dances, as usual on occasion of public joys, celebrate with thankfulness this great salvation which God has wrought for us. Note, When we have given God the praise, we may then take the pleasure of the extraordinary deliverances of the church; and be glad because of God's judgments, *i. e.* the operations of his providence, all which we may see wrought in wisdom (therefore called judgments) and working for the good of his church.

6. Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church's beauty, strength and safety, and faithfully transmit our observations to those that shall come after us, *ver. 12, 13.* Walk about Zion. Some think this refers to the ceremony of the triumph; let those that are employed in that solemnity walk round the walls, as they did, *Neh. xii. 31.* singing and praising God: And in doing this, let them tell the towers, and mark well the bulwarks, (1.) That they might magnify the late wonderful deliverance God had wrought for them. Let them observe with wonder, that the towers and bulwarks are all in their full strength, and none of them damaged; the palaces in their beauty, and none of them blemished; there is not the least damage done to the city by the kings that were assembled against it, *ver. 5.* Tell this to the generation following, as a wonderful instance of God's care of his holy city, that the enemies should not only not ruin or destroy it, but not so much as hurt or deface it. (2.) That they might fortify themselves against the fear of the like threatening danger another time.

Vol. II. No. LXXXIV.

And so, (1.) We may understand it literally of Jerusalem, and the strong hold of Zion. Let the daughters of Judah see the towers and bulwarks of Zion with as much pleasure as the kings her enemies saw them with terror, *ver. 5.* Jerusalem was generally looked upon as an impregnable place, as appears, *Lam. iv. 12. All the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that an enemy should have entered the gates of Jerusalem.* Nor could they have entered, if the inhabitants had not sinned away their defence. Set your heart to her bulwarks. That intimates that the principal bulwarks of Zion were not the objects of sense, which they might let their eye upon; but the objects of faith, which they must set their hearts upon; it is well enough fortified indeed both by nature and art; but its bulwarks that were mostly to be relied upon, were the social presence of God in it, the beauty of holiness he had put upon it, and the promises he had made concerning it. Consider Jerusalem's strength, and tell it to the generations to come, that they may do nothing to weaken it, and that if at any time it be in distress, they may not basely surrender it to the enemy as not tenable. Calvin observes here, that when they are directed to transmit to posterity a particular account of the towers and bulwarks and palaces of Jerusalem, it intimates, that in process of time they would all be destroyed, and remain no longer to be seen: for otherwise what need was there to preserve the description and history of them? When the disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple, their master told them, that in a little time one stone of it should not be left upon another, *Matt. xxiv. 1, 2.* Therefore, (2.) This must certainly be applied to the gospel church, that mount Zion, *Heb. xii. 22.* Consider the towers and bulwarks, and palaces of that, that you may be invited and encouraged to join yourselves to it, embark in it. See it founded on Christ, the rock fortified by the divine power, guarded by him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks, tell this to the generation following, that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests, and cleave to it.

7. Let us triumph in God, and in the assurances we have of his everlasting loving kindness, *ver. 14.* Tell this to the generation following, transmit this truth as a sacred depositum to your posterity, that this God which has now done such great things for us, is our God for ever and ever; he is constant and unchangeable in his love to us and care for us. (1.) If God be our God, he is ours for ever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is the everlasting blessedness of glorified saints, that God himself will be with them, and will be their God, *Rom. xxi. 3.* (2.) If he be our God, he will be our guide, our faithful constant guide to shew us our way, and to lead us in it; he will be so even unto death, which will be the period of our way, and will bring us to our rest. He will lead and keep us, even to the last. He will be our guide above death: so some. He will guide us, as to let us above the reach of death, so that it shall not be able to do us any real hurt. He will be our guide beyond death, so others. He will conduct us safe to a happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, he will conduct and convey us safe to death, through death, and beyond death; down to death, and up again to glory.

## P S A L M XLIX.

This psalm is a sermon, and so is the next. In most of the psalms we have the penman praying or praising; in these we have him preaching; and it is our duty in singing psalms to teach and admonish ourselves and one another. The scope and design of this discourse, is to convince the men of this world of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the things of this world, and so to persuade them to seek the things of a better world; as also to comfort the people of God in reference to their own troubles, and the grief that ariseth from the prosperity of the wicked. (1.) In the preface he propoeth to awaken worldly people out of their security, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* and to comfort himself and other godly people in a day of distress, *ver. 4, 5.* (2.) In the rest of this psalm, (1.) He endeavours to convince sinners of their folly in doing upon the wealth of this world, by shewing them, (1.) That they cannot with all their wealth save their friends from death, *ver. 6-9.* (2.) They cannot save themselves from death, *ver. 10.* (3.) They cannot secure themselves a happiness in this world, *ver. 11, 12.* Much less, (4.) can they secure to themselves a happiness in the other world, *ver. 14.* (2.) He endeavours to comfort himself and other good people, (1.) Against the fear of death, *ver. 15.* (2.) Against the fear of the prospering power of wicked people, *ver. 16-20.* In singing this psalm let us receive these instructions, and be wise.

To the chief musician, a psalm for the sons of Korah.

1. **H**EAR this, all ye people, give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: 2. Both low and high, rich and poor together. 3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom: and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. 4. I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying upon the harp. 5. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

This is the psalmist's preface to his discourse concerning the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; and we seldom meet with an introduction more solemn than this is, for there is no truth of more undoubted certainty, nor of greater weight and importance, and the consideration of which will be of more advantage to us.

1. He demands the attention of others to that which he was about to say, *ver. 1, 2.* Hear this all ye people, hear it and heed it, hear it and consider it; what is spoken once, hear twice, *Hear, and give ear, Psalm lxxii. 9, 11.* Now only hear, all ye Israelites, and give ear all ye inhabitants of Canaan, but hear all ye people, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world; for this doctrine is not peculiar to those who are blessed with divine revelation, but even the light of nature witnesseth to it. All men may know, and therefore let all men consider, that their riches will not profit them in the day of death. Both low and high, both rich and poor, must come together to hear the word of God; let both therefore hear this with application. Let those that are high and rich in the world hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions, and not to be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyments of them, but lay them out in doing good, that with them they may make to themselves friends; let those that are poor and low hear this, and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. Poor people are as much in danger by an inordinate desire towards the wealth of the world, as rich people by an inordinate delight in it.

He gives a good reason why his discourse should be regarded, *ver. 3.*

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*My mouth shall speak of wisdom*; what he had to say, (1.) It was true and good. It is wisdom and understanding, it will make those wise and intelligent that receive it, and submit to it. It is not doubtful but certain, not trivial but weighty, not a matter of nice speculation but of admirable use to guide us in the right way to our great end. (2.) It was what he had himself well digested. What his mouth spoke was the meditation of his heart, as *Psalm xix. 14.*—*xlv. 1.* it was what God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered, and was fully apprized of the meaning of, and convinced of the truth of. That which ministers speak from their own hearts, is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers.

2. He engageth his own attention, *ver. 4. I will incline mine ear to a parable.* It is called a parable, not because it is figurative and obscure, but because it is a wise discourse, and very instructive: It is the same word that is used concerning Solomon's proverbs. The psalmist will himself incline his ear to it. This intimates, (1.) That he was taught it by the Spirit of God, and did not speak of himself. Those that undertake to teach others must first learn themselves. (2.) That he thought himself nearly concerned in it, and was resolved not to venture his own soul upon that bottom, which he dissuaded others from venturing theirs upon. (3.) That he would not expect others should attend to that which he himself did not attend to as a matter of the greatest importance. Where God gives the tongue of the learned, he first wakeneth the ear to hear as the learned, *Isa. l. 4.*

3. He promiseth to make the matter as plain, and as affecting as he could! *I will open my dark saying upon the harp.* What he learned for himself, he would not conceal or confine to himself, but would communicate it for the benefit of others. (1.) Some understood it not, it was a riddle to them, tell them of the vanity of the things that are seen, and of the reality and weight of invisible things, and they say, *Ah, Lord God, doth he not speak parables?* For the sake of such he would open this dark saying, and make it so plain that he that runs might read it. (2.) Others understood it well enough, but they were not moved by it, it never affected them, and for their sake he would open it upon the harp, and try that expedient to work upon them, to win upon them. *A verse may find him who a sermon flies.* Herbert.

4. He begins with the application of it to himself, and that is the right method in which to treat of divine things; we must first preach to ourselves, before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the folly of carnal security, *ver. 6.* he here lays down, from his own experience, the benefit and comfort of a holy gracious security, which they enjoy who trust in God, and not in their worldly wealth: *Wherefore should I fear?* he means wherefore should I fear their fear, (*Isa. viii. 12.*) the fears of worldly people. (1.) Wherefore should I be afraid of them? Wherefore should I fear in the days of trouble and persecution, when the iniquity of my heels, or my suppliants that endeavour to trip up my heels, shall compass me about, and they shall surround me with their mischievous attempts? Why should I be afraid of those, all whose power lies in their wealth, and that will not enable them to redeem their friends, and therefore I will not fear it, it cannot enable them to ruin me? The great men of the world will not appear at all formidable, when we consider what little stead their wealth will stand themselves in. We need not fear their casting us down from our excellency, who cannot support themselves in their own excellency. (2.) Wherefore should I be afraid like them? The days of old age and death are the days of evil, *Eccles. xii. 1.* In the day of judgment the iniquity of our heels, or of our steps, our past sins will compass us about, will be set in order before us. *Every work will be brought into judgment with every secret thing; and every one of us must give account of himself.* In these days worldly wicked people will be afraid, nothing more dreadful to them that have set their hearts upon the world, than to think of leaving it; death to them is the king of terrors, because after death the judgment, when their sins will surround them as so many furies; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? *Psalm xxiii. 4.* when his iniquities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified, and even then in the judgment day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they can lift up their heads with joy, *Luke xxi. 26—28.* Note, The children of God, though never so poor, are in this truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this world, that they are well guarded against the terrors of death, and the judgment to come.

6. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches: 7. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 8. (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.) 9. That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. 10. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. 11. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. 12. Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. 13. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in the graves from their dwelling.

In these verses we have,

1. A description of the spirit and way of worldly people, whose portion is in this life, *Psalm xvii. 14. xlix. 6—11.* It is taken for granted, that they have wealth, and a multitude of riches, *ver. 6.* Houses and lands of inheritance which they call their own, *ver. 11.* many times God gives abundance of the good things of this world, to bad men that live in contempt of him, and rebellion against him; by which it appears, that they are not the best things in themselves, for then God would give most of them to his best friends, and they are not the best things for us, for then they would not have so much of them, who being marked for ruin, are to be ripened for it by their prosperity, *Prov. i. 32.* It is possible a man may have abundance of the wealth of this world, and be made better by it; may therefore have his heart enlarged in love and thankfulness, and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described;

1. They repose a confidence in their riches. *They trust in their wealth,* *ver. 6.* they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil, and supply them with all good, and they need nothing else, no not God himself. Their gold is their hope, *Job xxi. 24.* and so it becomes their God. Thus our Saviour explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people, *Mark x. 24. How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* See *1 Tim. vi. 17.* 2. They that take a pride in their riches; they boast themselves in the multitude of them, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour, and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry. *My might, and the power of my hand has gotten me this wealth;* as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent than their neighbours. They boast that they have all they would have, *Psalm x. 3.* and can set all the world at defiance; I sit as a queen, and shall be a lady for ever; therefore they call their lands after their own names, hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory; and if their lands do retain the names by which they call them, it is but a poor honour: but many times they change their names when they change their owners.

3. They flatter themselves with an expectation of the perpetuity of their worldly possessions, *ver. 11. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever,* and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes: but it intimates, (1.) That this thought is deeply rooted in their minds, is rolled and revolved there, and carefully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts. A godly man has thoughts of the world; but they are his outward thoughts, his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things: but a worldly man has only some floating foreign thoughts of the things of God, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest his heart, and is upon the throne there. (2.) There it is industriously concealed; they cannot for shame say that they expect their houses to continue for ever, but inwardly they think so. If they cannot persuade themselves that they shall continue for ever, yet they are so foolish as to think their houses shall, and their dwelling-places; and suppose they should, what good will that do them, when they shall be no longer theirs? But they will not, for the world passeth away, and the fashion of it; all things are devoured by the teeth of time.

A demonstration of their folly herein. In general, *ver. 13. This their way is their folly.* Note, The ways of worldliness is a very foolish way: they that lay up their treasure on earth, and set their affections on things below, act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest. God himself pronounced him a fool who thought his goods were laid up for many years, and that they would be a portion for his soul, *Luke xii. 19, 20.* And yet their posterity approve their sayings, agree with them in the same sentiments, say as they say, and do as they do, and tread in the steps of their worldliness. Note, The love of the world is a disease that runs in the blood, men have it by kind, till the grace of God cures it.

To prove the folly of carnal worldlings, he shews,

1. That with all their wealth they cannot save the life of the dearest friend they have in the world, nor purchase a reprieve for him when he is under the arrest of death, *ver. 7, 8, 9. There is none of them can by any means redeem his brother.* His brother worldly, who would give him counter-security, out of his own estate, if he would but be bail for him: and gladly he would, in hopes that he might do the same kindness for him another time. But their words will not be taken one for another, nor will one man's estate be the ransom of another man's life. God doth not value it, it is of no account with him; and the true value of things is as they stand in his books. His justice will not accept it by way of commutation or equivalent. The Lord of our brother's life is the Lord of our estate, and may take both if he pleaseth, without either difficulty to himself or wrong to us; and therefore one cannot be ransom for another. We cannot bribe death, that our brother should still live, much less that he should live for ever in this world, nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we must needs die, and return to the dust, and there is no discharge from that war. What folly is it to trust to that, and boast of that, which will not enable us so much as for one hour to respite the execution of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or a friend that is to us as our own soul! It is certainly true, that *the redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever,* i. e. Life when it is going cannot be staid, and when it is gone it cannot be recalled by any human art, or worldly price. But this looks further to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old Testament saints had an eye to as the Redeemer. Immortality and an everlasting life is a jewel of too great a value to be purchased by the wealth of this world. *We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold,* *1 Pet. i. 18, 19.* The learned Dr. Hammond applies the 8th and 9th verses expressly to Christ: *the redemption of the soul shall be precious,* shall be high-priced, it shall cost very dear; but being once wrought, it shall cease for ever, i. e. it shall never need to be repeated, *Heb. ix. 25, 26.*—*x. 13.* and he, i. e. the Redeemer, *shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption;* he shall rise again before he sees corruption, and then shall live for evermore, *Rev. i. 18.* Christ did that for us which all the riches of the world could not do, and therefore good reason he should be dearer to us than any worldly things. Christ did that for us which a brother, a friend could not do for us, no not one of the best estate or interest; and therefore those that love father or brother more than him, are not worthy of him. This likewise shews the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which would never buy them.

2. That with all their wealth they cannot secure themselves from the stroke of death. The worldly sees, and it vexes him to see it, that *wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish,* *ver. 10.* Therefore he cannot but expect that it will at length come to his own turn; he cannot find any encouragement to hope that he himself shall continue for ever; and therefore foolishly comforts himself with this, that though he shall not, his house shall. Some rich people are wise, they are politicians; but they cannot outwit death, nor evade his stroke with all their art and management; others are fools and brutish, (*fortuna facit fatuis*) these though they do no good, yet perhaps do no great hurt in the world: but that shall not excuse them, they shall perish, and be taken away by death, as well as the wife that did mischief with their craft. Or by the wise and foolish we may understand the godly and the wicked: the godly die, and their death is their deliverance; the wicked perish, their death is their destruction; but however they leave their wealth to others. (1.) They cannot continue with it, nor will it serve to procure them a reprieve. That is a frivolous plea, though once it served a turn, *Jer. xli. 8. Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field.* (2.) They cannot carry it away with them, but must leave it behind them. (3.) They cannot foresee who will enjoy it when they have left it; they must leave it to others, but to whom they know not, perhaps to a fool, *Eccles. ii. 19.* perhaps to an enemy.

And as men's wealth will stand them in no stead in a dying hour, so neither will their honour, *ver. 12. Man being in honour, abideth not.* We will suppose a man advanced to the highest pinnacle of preferment, as great and happy as the world can make him, man in splendor, man at his best estate, surrounded



surrounded and supported with all the advantages he can desire, yet then he abideth not, his honour doth not continue, that is a fleeting shadow; he himself doth not. He carries not all night, this world is an inn, in which his stay is so short, that he can scarce be said to get a night's lodging in it; so little rest is there in these things; he has but a bating-time. *He is like the beasts that perish*, i. e. He must as certainly die as the beasts; and his death will be as final a period to his state in this world as theirs is: his dead body likewise will putrify as theirs doth; and (as Dr. Hammond observes) oftentimes the greatest honours and wealth unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity, (as the beasts when they die leave nothing behind them to their young ones, but the wide world to feed in) but fall into other hands immediately, for which he never designed to gather them.

3. That their condition on the other side death will be very miserable. The world they dote upon will not only not save them from death, but will sink them so much the lower into hell, *ver. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave.* Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter, *Hos. iv. 16.* and then death comes and shuts them up in the grave like fat sheep in a fold, *to be brought forth to the day of wrath*, Job xxi. 30. Multitudes of them like flocks of sheep dead of some disease, are thrown into the grave, and there death shall feed on them, the second death, *the worm that dies not*, Job xxiv. 20. Their own guilty consciences like so many vultures, shall be continually preying upon them, with *Son remember*, Luke xvi. 25. Death insults and triumphs over them, as it is represented in the fall of the king of Babylon, at which *hell from beneath is moved*, Isa. xiv. 9, &c. While a saint can ask proud death, *where is thy sting?* Death will ask the proud sinner, *where is thy wealth and pomp?* and the more he was fattened with prosperity, the more sweetly will death feed on him. And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake, *Dan. xii. 2. the upright shall have dominion over them*; shall not only be advanced to the highest dignity and honour, when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt; elevated to the highest heavens, when they are sunk to the lowest hell; but they shall be assessors with Christ in passing judgment upon them, and shall applaud the justice of God in their ruin. When the rich man in hell begged that Lazarus might bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue, he owned that that upright man had dominion over him, as the foolish virgins also owned the dominion of the wife, and that they lay much at their mercy, when they begged, *give us of your oil*. Let this comfort us, in reference to the oppressions which the upright are now often groaning under, and the dominion which the wicked have over them. The day is coming when the tables will be turned, (allude *Eph. ix. 1.*) and the upright will have the dominion. Let us now judge of things as they appear at that day. But what will become of all the beauty of this world? Alas! That shall all be consumed in the grave from their dwellings. All that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others praised and admired them, it was all adventitious and borrowed, it was paint and varnish, and they will rise in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave that consumes all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. Their beauty shall consume, the grave, or hell being a habitation to every one of them; and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever.

15. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me. Selah. 16. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. 17. For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. 18. Though whilst he lived, he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou dost well to thyself. 19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers, they shall never see light. 20. Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

Good reason is here given to good people,

1. Why they should not be afraid of death. There is no cause for that fear, if they have such a comfortable prospect as David here has of a happy state on the other side death, *ver. 15.* He had shewed, *ver. 14.* how miserable the dead are that die in their sins, where he shews how blessed the dead are that die in the Lord. The distinction of men's outward condition, how great a difference soever it makes in life, makes none at death; rich and poor meet in the grave: but the distinction of men's spiritual state, though in this life it makes a small difference, where all things come alike to all, yet at and after death, it makes a very great one; *now he is comforted and thou art tormented.* The righteous has hope in his death, so has David here hope in God concerning his soul. Note, The believing hope of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour. They hope,

(1.) That God will redeem their souls from the power of the grave; which includes, (1.) The preserving of the soul from going to the grave; with the body. The grave has a power over the body by virtue of the sentence, *Gen. iii. 19.* and it is cruel enough in executing that power, *Cant. viii. 6.* but it has no such power over the soul; it has power to silence and imprison, and consume the body; but the soul then moves, and acts, and converses more freely than ever, *Rev. vi. 9, 10.* it is immaterial and immortal. When death breaks the dark lantern, yet it doth not extinguish the candle that was pent up in it. (2.) The re-uniting of the soul and body at the resurrection. The soul is often put for the life; that indeed falls under the power of the grave for a time, but it shall at length be redeemed from it, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The God of life that was its creator at first, can and will be its redeemer at last. (3.) The salvation of the soul from eternal ruin. God shall redeem my soul from the *sheol* of hell, the wrath to come, that pit of destruction into which the wicked shall be cast, *ver. 14.* It is great comfort to dying saints, that they shall not be hurt at the second death, *Rev. ii. 11.* and therefore the first death hath no sting, and the grave no victory.

(2.) That he will receive them to himself. He redeems their souls, that he may receive them, *Pfalm xxxi. 5. Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it.* He will receive them into his favour, will admit them into his kingdom, into the mansions that are prepared for them, *John xiv. 2, 3.* those everlasting habitations, *Luke xvi. 9.*

2. Why they should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world, which as it is their pride and joy, so it has often been the envy, and grief, and terror of the righteous; which yet, all things considered, there is no reason for.

1. He supposeth the temptation very strong to envy the prosperity of sinners, and to be afraid that they will carry all before them with an high

hand, and with their wealth and interest to run down religion and religious people; to be afraid that they will be found the truly happy people; for he supposeth, (1.) That they are made rich, and so are enabled to give law to all about them, and have every thing at command: *peccunia obediunt omnes & omnia.* (2.) That the glory of their house, from very small beginnings, is increased greatly, which naturally makes a man haughty, insolent, and imperious, *ver. 16.* Thus they seem to be the favourites of heaven, and therefore formidable. (3.) That they are very easy and secure in themselves, and in their own minds, *ver. 18.* In his life-time he blessed his soul, i. e. he thought himself a very happy man, and such an one as he would be, and a very good man, and such an one as he should be, because he prospered in the world. He blessed his soul, as that rich fool who said to his soul, *sleep, take thine ease*, and be not disturbed either with cares and fears about the world, or with the rebukes and admonitions of conscience. All is well, and will be well for ever. Note, 1. It is of great consequence to us what that is in which we bless our souls, upon the score of which we think well of ourselves. Believers bless themselves in the God of truth, *Isa. lxxv. 16.* and think themselves happy if he be theirs; carnal people bless themselves in the wealth of the world, and think themselves happy if they have abundance of that. 2. There are many whose precious souls lie under God's curse, and yet they do themselves bless them, they applaud that in themselves which God condemns, and speak peace to themselves, when God denounceth war against them. Yet this is not all. (4.) They are in good reputation among their neighbours. Men will praise thee, and cry thee up, as having done well for thyself in raising such an estate and family. This is the sentiment of all the children of this world, that those do best for themselves that do most for their bodies, by heaping up riches, though nothing is done at the same time for the soul, nothing for eternity; and accordingly they bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhors, *Pfalm x. 3.* And if men were to be our judges, it were our wisdom thus to recommend ourselves to their good opinion: but what will it avail us to be approved of men, if God condemn us? Dr. Hammond understands this of the good man here spoken to, for it is the second person, not the wicked man spoken of. *He in his life-time blessed his soul, but thou shalt be praised for doing well unto thyself.* The worldling magnified himself, but thou that dost not like him speak well of thyself, but do well for thyself, in securing thy eternal welfare, thou shalt be praised, if not of men, yet of God, which will be thine everlasting honour.

2. He suggests that which is sufficient to take off the strength of the temptation, by directing us to look forward to the end of prospering sinners, *Pfalm lxxiii. 17.* Think what they will be in the other world, and you will see no cause to envy them what they are and have in this world.

1. In the other world they will be never the better for all the wealth and prosperity they are now so fond of; it is a miserable portion, which will not last so long as they must, *ver. 17.* When he dies, it is taken for granted that he goes into another world himself, but he shall carry nothing away with him, of all that which he has been so long heaping up. The greatest and wealthiest cannot therefore be the happiest, because they are never the better for their living in this world; as they came naked into it, they shall go naked out of it: But those have something to shew in the other world for their living in this world, who can say, through grace, that though they came corrupt and sinful, and spiritually naked into it, they go renewed and sanctified, and well clothed with the righteousness of Christ, out. They that are rich in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, have something which when they die, they shall carry away with them, something which death cannot strip them of, nay, which death will be the improvement of; but for worldly possessions, as we brought nothing into the world, but what we have we had from others, so it is certain we shall carry nothing out, but leave it to others, *1 Tim. vi. 7.* They shall descend, but their glory, that which they called and counted their glory, and gloried in, shall not descend after them, to lessen the disgrace of death and the grave; to bring them off in the judgment, or abate the torments of hell; grace is glory that will ascend with us, but no earthly glory will descend after us.

2. In the other world they will be infinitely the worse for all their abuses of the wealth and prosperity they enjoyed in this world, *ver. 19.* The soul shall go to the generation of his fathers, his worldly-wicked fathers whose sayings he approved, and whose steps he trod in, his fathers that would not hearken to the word of God, *Sech. i. 5.* He shall go to be there where they are that shall never see light, shall never have the least glimpse of comfort and joy, being condemned to utter darkness. Be not afraid then of the pomp and power of wicked people; for man that is in honour, if he be not wise and good, his end will be miserable; if he understand not, he is to be pitied rather than envied: A fool, a wicked man in honour, is really as despicable an animal as any under the sun; he is like the beasts that perish, *ver. 20.* and it is better be a beast, than be a man that makes himself like a beast. Men in honour that understand not, that know and do their duty and make conscience of it, are as Gods and children of the most High: But men in honour that understand not, that are proud and sensual, and oppressive, are as beasts, and they shall perish like the beasts ingloriously as to this world, though not like the beasts indemnified as to another world. Let prospering sinners therefore be afraid of themselves, but let not even suffering saints be afraid of them.

## P S A L M L.

This psalm, as the former, is a psalm of instruction, not of prayer or praise; it is a psalm of reproof and admonition, in singing of which we are to teach and admonish one another. In the foregoing psalm, after a general demand of attention, God by his prophet dauid, *ver. 3.* with the children of this world, to convince them of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the wealth of this world; in this psalm, after a like preface, he deals with those that were in profession the church's children, to convince them of their sin and folly in placing their religion in ritual services, while they neglected practical godliness; and this is as sure a way to ruin as the other. This psalm is intended,

1. As a reproof to the carnal Jews, both those that rested in the external performances of their religion, and were remiss in the more excellent duty of prayer and praise; and those that expounded the law to others, but lived wicked lives themselves. 2. As a prediction of the abolishing of the ceremonial law, and of the introducing of a spiritual way of worship, in and by the kingdom of the Messiah, *John iv. 23, 24.* 3. As a representation of the day of judgment, in which God will call men to an account concerning the observance of those things which they have thus been taught; men shall be judged according to what is written in the books; and therefore Christ is fitly represented speaking as a judge, them when he speaks as a lawgiver. Here is, (1.) The glorious appearance of the prince that gives law and judgment, *ver. 1-6.* (2.) Instruction given to his worshippers to turn their sacrifices into prayers, *ver. 7-15.* (3.) A rebuke to those that pretend to worship God, but live



*My mouth shall speak of wisdom*; what he had to say, (1.) It was true and good. It is wisdom and understanding, it will make those wise and intelligent that receive it, and submit to it. It is not doubtful but certain, not trivial but weighty, not a matter of nice speculation but of admirable use to guide us in the right way to our great end. (2.) It was what he had himself well digested. What his mouth spoke was the meditation of his heart, as *Psalm xix. 14.*—*xlv. 1.* it was what God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered, and was fully apprized of the meaning of, and convinced of the truth of. That which ministers speak from their own hearts, is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers.

2. He engageth his own attention, *ver. 4. I will incline mine ear to a parable.* It is called a parable, not because it is figurative and obscure, but because it is a wise discourse, and very instructive: It is the same word that is used concerning Solomon's proverbs. The psalmist will himself incline his ear to it. This intimates, (1.) That he was taught it by the Spirit of God, and did not speak of himself. Those that undertake to teach others must first learn themselves. (2.) That he thought himself nearly concerned in it, and was resolved not to venture his own soul upon that bottom, which he dissuaded others from venturing theirs upon. (3.) That he would not expect others should attend to that which he himself did not attend to as a matter of the greatest importance. Where God gives the tongue of the learned, he first *strengtheneth the ear to hear as the learned*, *Isa. l. 4.*

3. He promisseth to make the matter as plain, and as affecting as he could! *I will open my dark saying upon the harp.* What he learned for himself, he would not conceal or confine to himself, but would communicate it for the benefit of others. (1.) Some understood it not, it was a riddle to them, tell them of the vanity of the things that are seen, and of the reality and weight of invisible things, and they say, *Ah, Lord God, doth he not speak parables?* For the sake of such he would open this dark saying, and make it to plain that he that runs might read it. (2.) Others understood it well enough, but they were not moved by it, it never affected them, and for their sake he would open it upon the harp, and try that expedient to work upon them, to win upon them. *A verse may find him who a sermon flies.* Herbert.

4. He begins with the application of it to himself, and that is the right method in which to treat of divine things; we must first preach to ourselves, before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the folly of carnal security, *ver. 6.* he here lays down, from his own experience, the benefit and comfort of a holy gracious security, which they enjoy who trust in God, and not in their worldly wealth: *Wherefore should I fear?* he means *wherefore should I fear their fear*, (*Isa. viii. 12.*) the fears of worldly people. (1.) Wherefore should I be afraid of them? Wherefore should I fear in the days of trouble and persecution, when the iniquity of my heels, or my supplanters that endeavour to trip up my heels, shall compass me about, and they shall surround me with their mischievous attempts? Why should I be afraid of those, all whose power lies in their wealth, and that will not enable them to redeem their friends, and therefore I will not fear it, it cannot enable them to ruin me? The great men of the world will not appear at all formidable, when we consider what little stand their wealth will stand themselves in. We need not fear their casting us down from our excellency, who cannot support themselves in their own excellency. (2.) Wherefore should I be afraid like them? The days of old age and death are the *days of evil*, *Eccles. xii. 1.* In the day of judgment the iniquity of our heels, or of our steps, our past sins will compass us about, will be set in order before us. *Every work will be brought into judgment with every secret thing*; and every one of us must give account of himself. In these days worldly wicked people will be afraid, nothing more dreadful to them that have set their hearts upon the world, than to think of leaving it; death to them is the king of terrors, because after death the judgment, when their sins will surround them as so many furies; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? *Psal. xxiii. 4.* when his iniquities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified, and even then in the judgment day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they can lift up their heads with joy, *Luke xxi. 26—28.* Note, The children of God, though never so poor, are in this truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this world, that they are well guarded against the terrors of death, and the judgment to come.

6. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches: 7. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: 8. (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.) 9. That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption. 10. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. 11. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. 12. Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. 13. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in the graves from their dwelling.

In these verses we have,

1. A description of the spirit and way of worldly people, whose portion is in this life, *Psal. xvii. 14. xlix. 6—11.* It is taken for granted, that they have wealth, and a multitude of riches, *ver. 6.* Houses and lands of inheritance which they call their own, *ver. 11.* many times God gives abundance of the good things of this world, to bad men that live in contempt of him, and rebellion against him; by which it appears, that they are not the best things in themselves, for then God would give most of them to his best friends, and they are not the best things for us, for then they would not have to much of them, who being marked for ruin, are to be ripened for it by their prosperity, *Prov. i. 32.* It is possible a man may have abundance of the wealth of this world, and be made better by it, may therefore have his heart enlarged in love and thankfulness, and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described;

1. They repose a confidence in their riches. *They trust in their wealth*, *ver. 6.* they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil, and supply them with all good, and they need nothing else, no not God himself. Their gold is their hope, *Job xxi. 24.* and so it becomes their God. Thus our Saviour explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people, *Mark x. 24. How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!* See *1 Tim. vi. 17.* 2. They that take a pride in their riches; they boast themselves in the multitude of them, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour, and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry. *My might, and the power of my hand has gotten me this wealth*; as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent than their neighbours. They boast that they have all they would have, *Psal. x. 3.* and can set all the world at defiance; I sit as a queen, and shall be a lady for ever; therefore they call their lands after their own names, hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory; and if their lands do retain the names by which they call them, it is but a poor honour: but many times they change their names when they change their owners.

3. They flatter themselves with an expectation of the perpetuity of their worldly possessions, *ver. 11. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever*, and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes: but it intimates, (1.) That this thought is deeply rooted in their minds, is rolled and revolved there, and carefully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts. A godly man has thoughts of the world; but they are his outward thoughts, his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things: but a worldly man has only some floating foreign thoughts of the things of God, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest his heart, and is upon the throne there. (2.) There it is industriously concealed; they cannot for shame say that they expect their houses to continue for ever, but inwardly they think so. If they cannot persuade themselves that they shall continue for ever, yet they are so foolish as to think their houses shall, and their dwelling-places; and suppose they should, what good will that do them, when they shall be no longer theirs? But they will not, for the world passeth away, and the fashion of it; all things are devoured by the teeth of time.

A demonstration of their folly herein. In general, *ver. 13. This their way is their folly.* Note, The ways of worldliness is a very foolish way = they that lay up their treasure on earth, and set their affections on things below, act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest. God himself pronounced him a fool who thought his goods were laid up for many years, and that they would be a portion for his soul, *Luke xii. 19, 20.* And yet their posterity approve their sayings, agree with them in the same sentiments, say as they say, and do as they do, and tread in the steps of their worldliness. Note, The love of the world is a disease that runs in the blood, men have it by kind, till the grace of God cures it.

To prove the folly of carnal worldlings, he shews,

1. That with all their wealth they cannot save the life of the dearest friend they have in the world, nor purchase a reprieve for him when he is under the arrest of death, *ver. 7, 8, 9. There is none of them can by any means redeem his brother.* His brother worldly, who would give him counter-security, out of his own estate, if he would but be bail for him: and gladly he would, in hopes that he might do the same kindness for him another time. But their words will not be taken one for another, nor will one man's estate be the ransom of another man's life. God doth not value it, it is of no account with him; and the true value of things is as they stand in his books. His justice will not accept it by way of commutation or equivalent. The Lord of our brother's life is the Lord of our estate, and may take both if he pleaseth, without either difficulty to himself or wrong to us; and therefore one cannot be ransom for another. We cannot bribe death, that our brother should still live, much less that he should live for ever in this world, nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we must needs die, and return to the dust, and there is no discharge from that war. What folly is it to trust to that, and boast of that, which will not enable us so much as for one hour to respite the execution of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or a friend that is to us as our own soul! It is certainly true, that *the redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever*, i. e. Life when it is going cannot be staid, and when it is gone it cannot be recalled by any human art, or worldly price. But this looks further to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old Testament saints had an eye to as the Redeemer. Immortality and an everlasting life is a jewel of too great a value to be purchased by the wealth of this world. *We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold*, *1 Pet. i. 18, 19.* The learned Dr. Hammond applies the 8th and 9th verses expressly to Christ: *the redemption of the soul shall be precious*, shall be high-priced, it shall cost very dear; but being once wrought, it shall cease for ever, i. e. it shall never need to be repeated, *Heb. ix. 25, 26.*—*x. 13.* and he, i. e. the Redeemer, *shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption*; he shall rise again before he sees corruption, and then shall live for evermore, *Rev. i. 18.* Christ did that for us which all the riches of the world could not do, and therefore good reason he should be dearer to us than any worldly things. Christ did that for us which a brother, a friend could not do for us, no not one of the best estate or interest; and therefore those that *love father or brother more than him, are not worthy of him.* This likewise shews the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which would never buy them.

2. That with all their wealth they cannot secure themselves from the stroke of death. The worldly sees, and it vexes him to see it, that *wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish*, *ver. 10.* Therefore he cannot but expect that it will at length come to his own turn; he cannot find any encouragement to hope that he himself shall continue for ever; and therefore foolishly comforts himself with this, that though he shall not, his house shall. Some rich people are wise, they are politicians; but they cannot outwit death, nor evade his stroke with all their art and management; others are fools and brutish, (*fortuna furel fatuis*) these though they do no good, yet perhaps do no great hurt in the world: but that shall not excuse them, they shall perish, and be taken away by death, as well as the wife that did mischief with their craft. Or by the wise and foolish we may understand the godly and the wicked: the godly die, and their death is their deliverance; the wicked perish, their death is their destruction; but however they leave their wealth to others. (1.) They cannot continue with it, nor will it serve to procure them a reprieve. That is a frivolous plea, though once it served a turn, *Jer. xli. 8. Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field.* (2.) They cannot carry it away with them, but must leave it behind them. (3.) They cannot foresee who will enjoy it when they have left it; they must leave it to others, but to whom they know not, perhaps to a fool, *Eccles. ii. 19.* perhaps to an enemy.

And as men's wealth will stand them in no stead in a dying hour, so neither will their honour, *ver. 12. Man being in honour, abideth not.* We will suppose a man advanced to the highest pinnacle of preferment, as great and happy as the world can make him, man in splendour, man at his best estate, surrounded



surrounded and supported with all the advantages he can desire, yet then he abideth not, his honour doth not continue, that is a fleeting shadow; he himself doth not. He carries not all night, this world is an inn, in which his stay is so short, that he can scarce be said to get a night's lodging in it; so little rest is there in these things; he has but a bating-time. *He is like the beasts that perish*, i. e. He must as certainly die as the beasts, and his death will be as final a period to his state in this world as theirs is: his dead body likewise will putrify as theirs doth; and (as Dr. Hammond observes) oftentimes the greatest honours and wealth unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity, (as the beasts when they die leave nothing behind them to their young ones, but the wide world to feed in) but fall into other hands immediately, for which he never designed to gather them.

3. That their condition on the other side death will be very miserable. The world they dote upon will not only not save them from death, but will sink them so much the lower into hell, *ver. 14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave.* Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter, *Hos. iv. 16.* and then death comes and shuts them up in the grave like fat sheep in a fold, *to be brought forth to the day of wrath, Job xxi. 30.* A multitude of them like flocks of sheep dead of some disease, are thrown into the grave, and there death shall feed on them, the second death, *the worm that dies not, Job xxiv. 20.* Their own guilty consciences like so many vultures, shall be continually preying upon them, with *Son remember, Luke xvi. 25.* Death insults and triumphs over them, as it is represented in the fall of the king of Babylon, at which *hell from beneath is moved, Isa. xiv. 9, &c.* While a saint can ask proud death, *where is thy sting?* Death will ask the proud sinner, *where is thy wealth and pomp?* and the more he was fattened with prosperity, the more sweetly will death feed on him. And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake, *Dan. xii. 2. the upright shall have dominion over them;* shall not only be advanced to the highest dignity and honour, when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt; elevated to the highest heavens, when they are sunk to the lowest hell; but they shall be assurers with Christ in passing judgment upon them, and shall applaud the justice of God in their ruin. When the rich man in hell begged that Lazarus might bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue, he owned that that upright man had dominion over him, as the foolish virgins also owned the dominion of the wife, and that they lay much at their mercy, when they begged, *give us of your oil.* Let this comfort us, in reference to the oppressions which the upright are now often groaning under, and the dominion which the wicked have over them. The day is coming when the tables will be turned, (allude *Eph. ix. 1.*) and the upright will have the dominion. Let us now judge of things as they will appear at that day. But what will become of all the beauty of the world? Alas! That shall all be consumed in the grave from their dwellings. All that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others called and admired them, it was all adventitious and borrowed, it was paint and varnish, and they will rise in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave that consumes all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. Their beauty shall consume, the grave, or hell being a habitation to every one of them; and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever.

15. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for he shall receive me. Selah. 16. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. 17. For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. 18. Though whilst he lived, he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou dost well to thyself. 19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers, they shall never see light. 20. Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

Good reason is here given to good people,

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2. Why they should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world, which as it is their pride and joy, so it has often been the envy, and grief, and terror of the righteous; which yet, all things considered, there is no reason for.

1. He supposeth the temptation very strong to envy the prosperity of sinners, and to be afraid that they will carry all before them with an high

hand, and with their wealth and interest to run down religion and religious people; to be afraid that they will be found the truly happy people; for he supposeth, (1.) That they are made rich, and so are enabled to give law to all about them, and have every thing at command: *perpetrator obedient omnes & omnia.* (2.) That the glory of their houses, from very small beginnings, is increased greatly, which naturally makes a man haughty, insolent, and imperious, *ver. 16.* Thus they seem to be the favourites of heaven, and therefore formidable. (3.) That they are very safe and secure in themselves, and in their own minds, *ver. 18.* In his life-time he blessed his soul, i. e. he thought himself a very happy man, and such an one as he would be, and a very good man, and such an one as he should be, because he prospered in the world. He blessed his soul, as that rich fool was said to his soul, *fool, take thine ease,* and be not disturbed either with cares and fears about the world, or with the rebukes and admonitions of conscience. All is well, and will be well for ever. Note, 1. It is of great consequence to us what that is in which we bless our souls, upon the score of which we think well of ourselves. Believers bless themselves in the God of truth, *Isa. lxx. 16.* and think themselves happy if he be theirs; carnal people bless themselves in the wealth of the world, and think themselves happy if they have abundance of that. 2. There are many whose precious souls lie under God's curse, and yet they do themselves bless them, they applaud that in themselves which God condemns, and speak peace to themselves, when God denounceth war against them. Yet this is not all. (4.) They are in good reputation among their neighbours. Men will praise thee, and cry thee up, as having done well for thyself in raising such an estate and family. This is the sentiment of all the children of this world, that those do best for themselves that do most for their bodies, by heaping up riches, though nothing is done at the same time for the soul, nothing for eternity; and accordingly they bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhors, *Psalm x. 3.* And if men were to be our judges, it were our wisdom thus to recommend ourselves to their good opinion: but what will it avail us to be approved of men, if God condemn us? Dr. Hammond understands this of the good man here spoken to, for it is the second person, not the wicked man spoken of. *He in his life-time blessed his soul, but thou shalt be praised for doing well unto thyself.* The worldling magnified himself, but then that doth not like him speak well of thyself, but do well for thyself, in securing thy eternal welfare, thou shalt be praised, if not of men, yet of God, which will be thine everlasting honour.

2. It suggests that which is sufficient to take off the strength of the temptation, by directing us to look forward to the end of prospering sinners, *Psalm lxxii. 17.* Think what they will be in the other world, and you will see no cause to envy them what they are and have in this world.

1. In the other world they will be never the better for all the wealth and prosperity they are now so fond of; it is a miserable portion, which will not last so long as they must, *ver. 17.* When he dies, it is taken for granted that he goes into another world himself, but he shall carry nothing away with him, of all that which he has been so long heaping up. The greatest and wealthiest cannot therefore be the happiest, because they are never the better for their living in this world; as they came naked into it, they shall go naked out of it: But those have something to shew in the other world for their living in this world, who can say, through grace, that though they came corrupt and sinful, and spiritually naked into it, they go renewed and sanctified, and well clothed with the righteousness of Christ, out. They that are rich in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, have something which when they die, they shall carry away with them, something which death cannot strip them of, nay, which death will be the improvement of; but for worldly possessions, as we brought nothing into the world, but what we have had from others, so it is certain we shall carry nothing out, but leave it to others, *1 Tim. vi. 7.* They shall descend, but their glory, that which they called and counted their glory, and gloried in, shall not descend after them, to lessen the disgrace of death and the grave; to bring them off in the judgment, or abate the torments of hell; grace is glory that will ascend with us, but no earthly glory will descend after us.

2. In the other world they will be infinitely the worse for all their abuses of the wealth and prosperity they enjoyed in this world, *ver. 19.* The soul shall go to the generation of his fathers, his worldly-wicked fathers whose sayings he approved, and whose steps he trod in, his fathers that would not hearken to the word of God, *Lech. i. 5.* He shall go to be there where they are that shall never see light, shall never have the least glimpse of comfort and joy, being condemned to utter darkness. Be not afraid then of the pomp and power of wicked people; for man that is in honour, if he be not wise and good, his end will be miserable; if he understand not, he is to be pitied rather than envied: A fool, a wicked man in honour, is really as despicable an animal as any under the sun; he is like the beasts that perish, *ver. 20.* and it is better be a beast, than be a man that makes himself like a beast. Men in honour that understand not, that know and do their duty and make conscience of it, are as Gods and children of the most High: But men in honour that understand not, that are proud and sensual, and oppressive, are as beasts, and they shall perish like the beasts ingloriously as to this world, though not like the beasts indemnified as to another world. Let prospering sinners therefore be afraid of themselves, but let not even suffering saints be afraid of them.

## P S A L M L.

This psalm, as the former, is a psalm of instruction, not of prayer or praise; it is a psalm of reproof and admonition, in singing of which we are to teach and admonish one another. In the foregoing psalm, after a general demand of attention, God by his prophet deals, *ver. 3.* with the children of this world, to convince them of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the wealth of this world; in this psalm, after a like preface, he deals with those that were in profession the church's children, to convince them of their sin and folly in placing their religion in ritual services, while they neglected practical godliness; and this is as sure a way to ruin as the other. This psalm is intended, 1. As a reproof to the carnal Jews, both those that rested in the external performances of their religion, and were remiss in the more excellent duty of prayer and praise; and those that expounded the law to others, but lived wicked lives themselves. 2. As a prediction of the abolishing of the ceremonial law, and of the introducing of a spiritual way of worship, in and by the kingdom of the Messiah, *Joh. iv. 23, 24.* 3. As a representation of the day of judgment, in which God will call men to an account concerning the observance of those things which they have thus been taught; men shall be judged according to what is written in the books; and therefore Christ is fitly represented speaking as a judge, then when he speaks as a lawgiver. Here is, (1.) The glorious appearance of the prince that gives law and judgment, *ver. 1--6.* (2.) Instruction given to his worshippers to turn their sacrifices into prayers, *ver. 7--15.* (3.) A rebuke to those that pretend to worship God, but live



live in disobedience to his commands, ver. 16—20. *their doom read,* ver. 21, 22. *and warning given to all to look to their conversation as well as to their devotions,* ver. 23. *And those instructions and admonitions we must take to ourselves, and give to one another in singing this psalm.*

¶ A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. **T**HE mighty God, even the LORD hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof. 2. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty God hath shined. 3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4. He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth, that he may judge his people. 5. Gather my faints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. 6. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

It is probable, Asaph was not only the chief musician that was to put a tune to this psalm, but was himself the penman of it; for we read that in Hezekiah's time they praised God in the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. Here is,

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings, ver. 1. *the mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken:* El, Elohim, Jehovah, the God of infinite power, justice, and mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God is the judge, the Son of God came for judgment into the world, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment. All the earth is called to attend not only because the controversy God had with his people Israel, for their hypocrisy and ingratitude, might safely be referred to any man of reason; nay, let the house of Israel itself judge between God and his vineyard, Isa. v. 3. but because all the children of men are concerned to know the right way of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up, all should be instructed in the evangelical worship, and invited to join in it, see Mat. i. 11. Acts x. 34. And because in the day of final judgment, all nations shall be gathered together to receive their doom, and every man shall give an account of himself unto God.

2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat. As when God gave the law to Israel in the wilderness it is said, *he came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir, and shined forth from mount Paran, and came with ten thousand of his saints, and then from his right hand went a fiery law,* Deut. xxxiii. 2. So with allusion to that, when God comes to reprove them for their hypocrisy, and to send forth his gospel to supersede the legal institutions, it is said here, (1.) *That he shall shine out of Zion,* as then from the top of Sinai, ver. 2. Because in Zion now his oracle was fixed, thence his judgments upon that provoking people were denounced, and thence the orders issued for the execution of them, Joel ii. 1. *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion.* Sometimes there are more than ordinary appearances of God's presence and power working with and by his word and ordinances, for the convincing of men's consciences, and the reforming and refining of his church; and then God who always dwells in Zion, may be said to shine out of Zion. And because the gospel which set up spiritual worship, was to go forth from mount Zion, Isa. ii. 4. Mic. iv. 1. and the preachers of it were to begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. and Christians are said to come unto Mount Zion to receive their instructions, Heb. xii. 22—28. Zion is here called the perfection of beauty, because it was the holy hill, and holiness is indeed the perfection of beauty. (2.) *That he shall come and not keep silence,* shall no longer seem to wink at the sins of men as he had done, ver. 21. but shall shew his displeasure at them; and shall also cause that mystery to be published to the world by his holy apostles, which had long lain hid, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs,* Eph. iii. 5, 6. and that the partition-wall of the ceremonial law should be taken down; this shall now no longer be concealed. In the great day our God shall come, and shall not keep silence, but shall make those to hear his judgment that would not hearken to his law. (3.) *That his appearance should be very majestic and terrible, a fire shall devour before him.* The fire of his judgment shall make way for the rebukes of his word, in order to the awakening of the hypocritical nation of the Jews, that the sinners in Zion being afraid of that devouring fire (Isa. xxxiii. 14.) they might be startled out of their sins. When his gospel kingdom was to be set up, Christ came to send fire on the earth, Luke xii. 44. And the Spirit was given in cloven tongues as of fire, introduced by a rushing mighty wind, which was very tempestuous, Acts ii. 2, 3. And in the last judgment, Christ shall come in a flaming fire, 2 Thess. i. 8. see Dan. vii. 9. Heb. x. 27. (4.) *That as on mount Sinai, he came with ten thousand of his saints,* so he shall now call to the heavens from above, to take notice of this solemn process, ver. 4. as Moses often called heaven and earth to witness against Israel, Deut. iv. 26—xxxi. 28. xxxii. 1. and God by his prophets, Isa. i. 2. Mic. vi. 2. And the equity of the judgment of the great day, will be attested and applauded by heaven and earth, by faints and angels, even all the holy myriads.

3. The parties summoned, ver. 5. *Gather my faints unto me.* This may be understood either, (1.) Of faints indeed; Let them be gathered to God through Christ; let the few pious Israelites be set by themselves, for to them the following denunciations of wrath do not belong; rebukes to hypocrites, ought not to be terrors to the upright. When God will reject the services of those that only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those that in sacrificing make a covenant with him, and so attend to and answer the end of the institution of sacrifices. The design of the preaching of the gospel, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom, was to gather together in one the children of God, John xi. 52. And at the second coming of Jesus Christ all his faints shall be gathered together unto him, 2 Thess. ii. 1. to be assessors with him in the judgment, for the faints shall judge the world, 1 Cor. vi. 2. Now it is here given as a character of the faints, that they have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Note, 1. Those only shall be gathered to God as his faints, who have in sincerity covenanted with him, who have taken him to be their God, and given up themselves to him to be his people, and thus have joined themselves unto the Lord. 2. It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great sacrifice, (from whom all the legal sacrifices derived what value they had) that we poor sinners can covenant with God, so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant before we can be admitted again into covenant. Or, (2.) It may be understood of faints in profession, such as the people of Israel were, who are called a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, Exod. xix. 6. They were as a body politic taken into covenant with God, the covenant of peculiarity, and it was done with great solemnity by sacrifice, Exod. xxiv. 8.

Let them come and hear what God hath to say to them; let them receive the reproofs God sends them now by his prophets, and the gospel he will in due time send them by his Son, which shall supersede the ceremonial law; and if these be slighted, let them expect to hear from God another way, and to be judged by that word they will not ruled by.

4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold, ver. 6. *The heavens shall declare his righteousness;* those heavens that were called to be witnesses to the trial, ver. 4. *the people in heaven shall say, Hallelujah.* True and righteous are his judgments, Rev. xix. 1, 2. The righteousness of God in all the rebukes of his word and providence, in the establishment of his gospel, (which brings in an everlasting righteousness, and in which the righteousness of God is revealed) and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare, i. e. (1.) It will be universally known and proclaimed to all the world. *As the heavens declare the glory,* the wisdom and power of God the creator, Psalm xix. 1. so they shall no less openly declare the glory; the justice, and righteousness of God the judge; and so loud do they proclaim both, that *there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard,* as it follows there, ver. 3. (2.) It will be incontestibly owned and proved; who can deny what the heavens declare? Even sinners own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God. The reason given is, for God is judge himself, and therefore, (1.) He will be just; for it is impossible he should do any wrong to any of his creatures, he never did nor ever will. When men are employed to judge for him, it is possible they may do unjustly; but when he is judge himself, there can be no injustice done. *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?* The apostle for this reason startles at the thought of it: God forbid! for then *how shall God judge the world?* Rom. iii. 5, 6. These decisions will be perfectly just, for against them there will lie no exception, and from them there will lie no appeal. He will be justified: God is judge, and therefore he will not only execute justice, but he will oblige all to own it; for he *will be clear when he judgeth,* Psalm li. 4.

7. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. 8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. 9. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. 10. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12. I was hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. 13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? 14. Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High. 15. And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

God is here dealing with those that placed all their religion in the observances of the ceremonial law, and thought those sufficient.

1. He lays down the original contract between him and Israel, in which they had avouched him to be their God, and he them to be his people, and so both parties were agreed, ver. 7. *Hear O my people, and I will speak.* Note, It is justly expected that whatever others do when he speaks, his people should give ear; who will if they do not? and then we may comfortably expect that God will speak to us when we are ready to hear what he saith; even when he testifies against us in the rebukes and threatenings of his word and providences, we must be forward to hear what he saith, to hear even the rod, and him that has appointed it.

2. He puts a slight upon the legal sacrifices, ver. 8, &c. Now, (1.) This may be considered as looking back to the use of these under the law. God had a controversy with the Jews, but what was the ground of the controversy? not their neglect of the ceremonial institutions; no, they had not been wanting in the observance of them, their burnt-offerings had been continually before God, they took a pride in them, and hoped by their offerings to procure a dispensation for their lust, as the adulterous woman, Prov. vii. 14. Their constant sacrifices they thought would both expiate and excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. Nay, if they had in some degree neglected these institutions, yet that should not have been the cause of God's quarrel with them, for it was but a small offence in comparison with the immoralities of their conversation. They thought God was mightily beholden to them for the many sacrifices they had brought to his altar, and that they had made him very much their debtor by them, as if he could not have maintained his numerous family of priests, without their contributions; but God here shews them the contrary, (1.) That he did not need their sacrifices; what occasion had he for their bullocks and goats, that has the command of all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, ver. 9, 10. has an incontestible property in them, and dominion over them, has them all always in his eye, and within his reach, and can make what use he pleaseth of them; they all wait on him, and are all at his dispose, Psalm civ. 27, 28, 29. Can we add any thing to his store, whose all the wild fowl and wild beasts are, the world itself and the fulness thereof? ver. 11, 12. God's infinite self-sufficiency proves our utter insufficiency to add any thing to him. (2.) That he could not be benefited by their sacrifices. Their goodness of this kind could not possibly extend unto him, neither, if they were in this matter righteous, was he the better, ver. 13. *Will I eat the flesh of bulls?* It is as absurd to think that their sacrifices could of themselves, and by virtue of any innate excellency in them, add any pleasure or praise to God, as it would be to imagine that an infinite Spirit could be supported by meat and drink as our bodies are. It is said indeed of the demons whom the Gentiles worshipped, that they *did eat of the fat of the sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings,* Deut. xxxii. 38. they regaled themselves in the homage they robbed the true God of; but will the great Jehovah be thus entertained? no, *to obey is better than sacrifice,* and to love God and our neighbour, *better than all burnt offerings.* So much better, that God by his prophets often told them that their sacrifices were not only not acceptable, but abominable to him, while they lived in sin; instead of pleasing him he looked upon them as a mockery, and therefore an affront and provocation to him; see Prov. xv. 8. Isa. i. 11. &c.—lxvi. 3. Jer. xvi. 20. Amos v. 21. They are therefore here warned not to rest in these performances; but to carry themselves in all other instances towards God as their God.

(2.) This may be considered as looking forward to the abolishing of these by the gospel of Christ. Thus Dr. Hammond understands it. When God shall set up the kingdom of the Messiah, he shall abolish the old way of worship by sacrifice and offerings, he will no more have those to be continually



nally before him, ver. 8. he will no more require of his worshippers to bring him their bullocks and their goats to be burnt upon his altar, ver. 9. For indeed he never appointed this as that which he had any need of, or took any pleasure in, for, besides that all we have is his already, he has far more beasts in the forest, and upon the mountains, which we know nothing of, nor have any property in, than we have in our flocks; but he instituted it to prefigure the great sacrifice which his own Son should in the fulness of time offer upon the cross, to make atonement for sin, and all the other spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, with which God through Christ will be well-pleased.

3. He directs to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise, as those which under the law were preferred before all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and on which then the greatest stress was laid, and which now under the gospel come in the room of those carnal ordinances, which were imposed until the times of reformation. He sheweth us here, ver. 14, 15, what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept when sacrifices are slighted and superseded. (1.) We must make a penitent acknowledgment of our sins; offer to God confession, so some read it, and understand it of the confession of sin, in order to our giving glory to God, and taking shame to ourselves, that we may never return to it; *A broken and contrite heart* is the sacrifice which God will not despise, Psalm li. 17. If the sin were not abandoned, the sin-offering was not accepted. (2.) We must give God thanks for his mercies to us: offer to God thanksgiving every day, often every day, *seven times a day will I praise thee*, and upon special occasions, and this shall please the Lord, if it come from an humble thankful heart, full of love to him, and joy in him, *better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs*, Psalm lxxix. 30, 31. (3.) We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him; *Pay thy vows to the most High*, forsake thy sins, and do thy duty better, pursuant to the solemn promises thou hast made him to that purpose. When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received, we must be sure to pay the vows we made to him when we were in the pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted. Dr. Hammond applies this to the great gospel ordinance of the eucharist, in which we are to give thanks to God for his great love in sending his Son to save us, and to pay our vows of love and duty to him, and to give alms. Instead of all the Old Testament types of a Christ to come, we have that blessed memorial of a Christ already come. (4.) In the day of distress we must apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, ver. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble*, and not upon any other God: Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him. We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. This is a cheaper, easier, readier way of seeking his favour, than by a peace-offering, and yet more acceptable. (5.) When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him, not only by a grateful mention of his favour, but by living to his praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God; meeting him with our prayers when he afflicts us, and with our praises when he delivers us.

16. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? 17. Seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee. 18. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. 19. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. 20. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. 21. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. 23. Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.

God, by the psalmist, having instructed his people, in the right way of worshipping him, and keeping up their communion with him, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they were such as professed the Jewish or the Christian religion; hypocrisy is wickedness, for which God will judge. Observe here,

1. The charge drawn up against them. (1.) They are charged with invading and usurping the honours and privileges of religion, ver. 16. *What hast thou to do, O wicked man, to declare my statutes?* This is a challenge to those that are really profane, but seemingly godly, to shew what title they have to the cloke of religion, and by what authority they wear it, when they use it only to cover and conceal the abominable impieties of their hearts and lives: Let them make out their claim to it if they can: some think it points prophetically at the Scribes and Pharisees, that were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church, at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and that evangelical way of worship spoken of in the foregoing verses, were to be set up. They violently opposed that great revolution, and used all the power and interest which they had by sitting in Moses's seat to hinder it: but the account which our blessed Saviour gives of them, Matt. xxiii. and St. Paul, Rom. ii. 21, 22. make this exposition here agree very well to them. They took on them to declare God's statutes, but they hated Christ's instruction, and therefore what had they to do to expound the law, who reject the gospel? But it is applicable to all those that are practisers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be preachers of it. Note, It is very absurd in itself, and a great affront to the God of heaven, for those that are wicked and ungodly to declaim his statutes, and to take his covenant into their mouths: It is very possible, and too common for those that declare God's statutes to others, to live in disobedience to them themselves; and for those that take God's covenant in their mouths, yet in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and death; but they are guilty of an usurpation, they take to themselves an honour which they have no title to, and there is a day coming when they will be thrust out as intruders, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?*

(2.) They are charged with transgressing and violating the laws and precepts of religion.

(1.) They are charged with a daring contempt of the word of God, ver. 17. *Thou hatest instruction*. They loved to give instruction, and to tell others what they should do, for this fed their pride, and made them look great,

and by this craft they got their living; but they hated to receive instruction from God himself, for that would be a check upon them, and a mortification to them: Thou hatest discipline, the reproofs of the word, and the rebukes of providence. Those that hate to be reformed, no wonder they hate the means of reformation: *Thou castest my words behind thee*. They seemed to set God's words before them, when they sat in Moses's seat, and undertook to teach others out of the law, Rom. ii. 19. but in their conversations they cast God's words behind them, and did not care for seeing that rule which they were resolved not to be ruled by. This is despising the commandment of the Lord. (2.) A close confederacy with the worst of sinners, ver. 18. *When thou sawest a thief*, instead of reproving him and witnessing against him, as those should do that declare God's statutes, thou consentedst with him, didst approve of his practices, and desire to come in partner with him, and to share in the profits of his cursed trade; and *thou hast been partaker with adulterers*, hast done as they did, and encouraged them to go on in their wicked courses; hast done these things, and hast had pleasure in them that do them, Rom. i. 32.

(3.) A constant persisting in the worst of tongue sins, ver. 19. *Thou givest thy mouth to evil*; not only allowest thyself in, but addictest thyself wholly to all manner of evil speaking. (1.) Lying: *Thy tongue frameth deceit*, which notes contrivance and deliberation in lying: It knits or links deceit, so some. One lie begets another, and one fraud requires another to cover it. (2.) Slandering, ver. 20. *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother*, dost basely abuse and misrepresent him; magisterially judge and censure him, and pass sentence upon him, as if thou wert his master to whom he must stand or fall, whereas he is thy brother, as good as thou art, and upon the level with thee, for he is thy own mother's son. He is thy near relation, whom thou oughtest to love, to vindicate, and stand up for, if others abused him yet thou dost thyself abuse him, whose faults thou oughtest to cover and make the best of; if really he had done amiss, yet thou dost most falsely and unjustly charge him with that which he is innocent of; thou sittest and doth this, as a judge upon the bench with authority; thou sittest in the seat of the scornful, to deride and backbite those whom thou oughtest to respect and be kind to. Those that do ill themselves, commonly delight in speaking ill of others.

2. The proof of this charge, ver. 21. *These things thou hast done*; the fact is too plain to be denied, the fault too bad to be excused; these things, God knows, and thy own heart knows, thou hast done. The sins of sinners will be proved upon them beyond contradiction in the judgment of the great day. *I will reprove thee*, or convince thee, so that thou shalt have not one word to say for thyself. The day is coming when impenitent sinners will have their mouths for ever stopped, and be struck speechless. What confusion will they be filled with, when God shall set their sins in order before their eyes! They would not see their sins to their humiliation, but cast them behind their backs, covered them, and endeavoured to forget them, nor would they suffer their own consciences to put them in mind of them; but the day is coming, when God will make them see their sins to their everlasting shame and terror: he will set them in order, original sin, actual sins, sins against the law, sins against the gospel; against the first table, against the second table: sins of childhood and youth, of riper age, and old age. He will set them in order, as the witnesses are set in order, and called in order against the criminal, and asked what they have to say against him.

3. The judge's patience, and the sinners abuse of that patience: I kept silence, did not give thee any disturbance in thy sinful way, but let thee alone to take thy course; sentence against thine evil works was respited, and not executed speedily. Note, The patience of God is very great towards provoking sinners. He sees their sins, and hates them: it would be neither difficult nor damage to him to punish them, and yet he waits to be gracious, and gives them space to repent, that he may render them inexcusable if they repent not. His patience is the more wonderful, because the sinner makes such an ill use of it; *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself*, as weak and forgetful as thyself, as false to my word as thyself; nay, as much a friend to sin as thyself: Sinners take God's silence for consent, and his patience for connivance; and therefore the longer they are reprieved, the more are their hearts hardened; but if they turn not, they shall be made to see their error when it is too late, and that the God they provoke is just, and holy, and terrible, and not such a one as themselves.

4. The fair warning given of the dreadful doom of hypocrites, ver. 22. *Now consider this, ye that forget God*. Consider that God knows and keeps account of all your sins, that he will call you to an account for them; that patience abused will turn into the greater wrath; that though you forget God and your duty to him, he will not forget you and your rebellions against him; consider this in time, before it be too late; for if these things be not considered, and the consideration of them improved, he will *tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver*. It is the doom of hypocrites to be cut in funder, Matt. xxiv. 51. Note, (1.) Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked. They that know God, and yet do not obey him, do certainly forget him. (2.) Those that forget God, forget themselves; and it will never be right with them till they consider and recover themselves. Consideration is the first step towards conversion. (3.) Those that will not consider the warnings of God's word, will certainly be torn in pieces by the execution of his wrath. (4.) When God comes to tear sinners in pieces, there is no delivering them out of his hand. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can any friend they have in the world deliver them.

5. Full instructions given to us all how to prevent this fearful doom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; we have it, ver. 23. which directs us what to do, that we may attain our chief end.

(1.) Man's chief end is to glorify God, and we are here told, that whose offers praise glorifies him, whether he be Jew or Gentile, whose spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted from him. We must praise God, and we must sacrifice praise, direct it to God: as every sacrifice was: put it into the hands of the priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the altar, see that it be made by fire, sacred fire, that it be kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection; we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord. And this he is pleased in infinite condescension to interpret as the glorifying him. Hereby we give him the glory due to his name, and do what we can to advance the interests of his kingdom among men.

(2.) Man's chief end in conjunction with this, is to enjoy God; and we are here told, that those who order their conversation aright shall see his salvation. (1.) It is not enough for us to offer praise, but we must withal order our conversation aright. Thanksgiving is good, but thanks living is better. (2.) Those that would have their conversation right, must take care and pains to order it; to dispose it according to rule; to understand their way, and to direct it. (3.) Those that take care of their conversation make sure their salvation; then God will make to see his salvation; for it is a salvation ready to be revealed; he will make them to see it, and enjoy it, to see it, and make themselves happy for ever in it. Note, The right ordering of the conversation is the only way, and it is a sure way to obtain the great salvation.



live in disobedience to his commands, ver. 16—20. *Their doom read, ver. 21, 22. and warning given to all to look to their conversation as well as to their devotions, ver. 23. And those instructions and admonitions we must take to ourselves, and give to one another in singing this psalm.*

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. **T**HE mighty God, even the LORD hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun, unto the going down thereof. 2. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty God hath shined. 3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4. He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth, that he may judge his people. 5. Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. 6. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

It is probable, Asaph was not only the chief musician that was to put a tune to this psalm, but was himself the penman of it; for we read that in Hezekiah's time they praised God in the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. Here is,

1. The court called in the name of the King of kings, ver. 1. *the mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken*: El, Elohim, Jehovah, the God of infinite power, justice, and mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God is the judge, the Son of God came for judgment into the world, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment. All the earth is called to attend not only because the controversy God had with his people Israel, for their hypocrisy and ingratitude, might safely be referred to any man of reason; nay, let the house of Israel itself judge between God and his vineyard, Isa. v. 3. but because all the children of men are concerned to know the right way of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up, all should be instructed in the evangelical worship, and invited to join in it, see *Mat. i. 11. Acts x. 34.* And because in the day of final judgment, all nations shall be gathered together to receive their doom, and every man shall give an account of himself unto God.

2. The judgment set, and the judge taking his seat. As when God gave the law to Israel in the wilderness it is said, *he came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir, and shined forth from mount Paran, and came with ten thousand of his saints, and then from his right hand went a fiery law,* Deut. xxxiii. 2. So with allusion to that, when God comes to reprove them for their hypocrisy, and to send forth his gospel to supersede the legal institutions, it is said here, (1.) *That he shall shine out of Zion,* as then from the top of Sinai, ver. 2. Because in Zion now his oracle was fixed, thence his judgments upon that provoking people were denounced, and thence the orders issued for the execution of them, *Joel ii. 1. Blow ye the trumpet in Zion.* Sometimes there are more than ordinary appearances of God's presence and power working with and by his word and ordinances, for the convincing of men's consciences, and the reforming and refining of his church; and then God who always dwells in Zion, may be said to shine out of Zion. And because the gospel which set up spiritual worship, was to go forth from mount Zion, Isa. ii. 4. *Mic. iv. 1.* and the preachers of it were to begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. and Christians are said to come unto Mount Zion to receive their instructions, *Heb. xii. 22—28.* Zion is here called the perfection of beauty, because it was the holy hill, and holiness is indeed the perfection of beauty. (2.) *That he shall come and not keep silence,* shall no longer seem to wink at the sins of men as he had done, ver. 21. but shall shew his displeasure at them; and shall also cause that mystery to be published to the world by his holy apostles, which had long lain hid, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs,* Eph. iii. 5, 6. and that the partition-wall of the ceremonial law should be taken down; this shall now no longer be concealed. In the great day our God shall come, and shall not keep silence, but shall make those to hear his judgment that would not hearken to his law. (3.) That his appearance should be very majestic and terrible, *a fire shall devour before him.* The fire of his judgment shall make way for the rebukes of his word, in order to the awakening of the hypocritical nation of the Jews, that the sinners in Zion being afraid of that devouring fire (*Isa. xxxiii. 14.*) they might be startled out of their sins. When his gospel-kingdom was to be set up, Christ came to send fire on the earth, Luke xii. 44. And the Spirit was given in cloven tongues as of fire, introduced by a rushing mighty wind, which was very tempestuous, *Acts ii. 2, 3.* And in the last judgment, Christ shall come in a flaming fire, *2 Thess. i. 8.* see *Dan. vii. 9. Heb. x. 27.* (4.) That as on mount Sinai, he came with ten thousand of his saints, so he shall now call to the heavens from above, to take notice of this solemn process, ver. 4. as Moses often called heaven and earth to witness against Israel, *Deut. iv. 26—xxxi. 28. xxxii. 1.* and God by his prophets, *Isa. i. 2. Mic. vi. 2.* And the equity of the judgment of the great day, will be attested and applauded by heaven and earth, by saints and angels, even all the holy myriads.

3. The parties summoned, ver. 5. *Gather my saints unto me.* This may be understood either, (1.) Of saints indeed; let them be gathered to God through Christ; let the few pious Israelites be set by themselves, for to them the following denunciations of wrath do not belong; rebukes to hypocrites, ought not to be terrors to the upright. When God will reject the services of those that only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those that in sacrificing make a covenant with him, and so attend to and answer the end of the institution of sacrifices. The design of the preaching of the gospel, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom, was to gather together in one the children of God, *John xi. 52.* And at the second coming of Jesus Christ all his saints shall be gathered together unto him, *2 Thess. ii. 1.* to be assessors with him in the judgment, *for the saints shall judge the world,* 1 Cor. vi. 2. Now it is here given as a character of the saints, that they have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Note, 1. Those only shall be gathered to God as his saints, who have in sincerity covenanted with him, who have taken him to be their God, and given up themselves to him to be his people, and thus have joined themselves unto the Lord. 2. It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great sacrifice, (from whom all the legal sacrifices derived what value they had) that we poor sinners can covenant with God, so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant before we can be admitted again into covenant. Or, (2.) It may be understood of saints in profession, such as the people of Israel were, who were called a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, *Exod. xix. 6.* They were as a body politic taken into covenant with God, the covenant of peculiarity, and it was done with great solemnity by sacrifice, *Exod. xxiv. 8.*

Let them come and hear what God hath to say to them; let them receive the reproofs God sends them now by his prophets, and the gospel he will in due time send them by his Son, which shall supersede the ceremonial law; and if these be slighted, let them expect to hear from God another way, and to be judged by that word they will not ruled by.

4. The issue of this solemn trial foretold, ver. 6. *The heavens shall declare his righteousness*; those heavens that were called to be witnesses to the trial, ver. 4. *the people in heaven shall say, Hallelujah. True and righteous are his judgments,* Rev. xix. 1, 2. The righteousness of God in all the rebukes of his word and providence, in the establishment of his gospel, (which brings in an everlasting righteousness, and in which the righteousness of God is revealed) and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare, i. e. (1.) It will be universally known and proclaimed to all the world. *As the heavens declare the glory, the wisdom and power of God the creator,* Psalm xix. 1. so they shall no less openly declare the glory, the justice, and righteousness of God the judge; and so loud do they proclaim both, that *there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard,* as it follows there, ver. 3. (2.) It will be incontestably owned and proved; who can deny what the heavens declare? Even sinners own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God. The reason given is, for God is judge himself, and therefore, (1.) He will be just; for it is impossible he should do any wrong to any of his creatures, he never did nor ever will. When men are employed to judge for him, it is possible they may do unjustly; but when he is judge himself, there can be no injustice done. *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?* The apostle for this reason startles at the thought of it: God forbid! for then *how shall God judge the world?* Rom. iii. 5, 6. These decisions will be perfectly just, for against them there will lie no exception, and from them there will lie no appeal. He will be justified: God is judge, and therefore he will not only execute justice, but he will oblige all to own it; for he *will be clear when he judgeth,* Psalm li. 4.

7. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. 8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. 9. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. 10. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12. I was hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. 13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? 14. Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High. 15. And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

God is here dealing with those that placed all their religion in the observances of the ceremonial law, and thought those sufficient.

1. He lays down the original contract between him and Israel, in which they had avouched him to be their God, and he them to be his people, and so both parties were agreed, ver. 7. *Hear O my people, and I will speak.* Note, It is justly expected that whatever others do when he speaks, his people should give ear; who will if they do not? and then we may comfortably expect that God will speak to us when we are ready to hear what he saith; even when he testifies against us in the rebukes and threatenings of his word and providences, we must be forward to hear what he saith, to hear even the rod, and him that has appointed it.

2. He puts a slight upon the legal sacrifices, ver. 8, &c. Now, (1.) This may be considered as looking back to the use of these under the law. God had a controversy with the Jews, but what was the ground of the controversy? not their neglect of the ceremonial institutions; no, they had not been wanting in the observance of them, their burnt-offerings had been continually before God, they took a pride in them, and hoped by their offerings to procure a dispensation for their lust, as the adulterous woman, *Prov. vii. 14.* Their constant sacrifices they thought would both expiate and excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. Nay, if they had in some degree neglected these institutions, yet that should not have been the cause of God's quarrel with them, for it was but a small offence in comparison with the immoralities of their conversation. They thought God was mightily beholden to them for the many sacrifices they had brought to his altar, and that they had made him very much their debtor by them, as if he could not have maintained his numerous family of priests, without their contributions; but God here shews them the contrary, (1.) That he did not need their sacrifices; what occasion had he for their bullocks and goats, that has the command of all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, ver. 9, 10. has an incontestable property in them, and dominion over them, has them all always in his eye, and within his reach, and can make what use he pleaseth of them; they all wait on him, and are all at his dispose, *Psalm civ. 27, 28, 29.* Can we add any thing to his store, whose all the wild fowl and wild beasts are, the world itself and the fulness thereof? ver. 11, 12. God's infinite self-sufficiency proves our utter insufficiency to add any thing to him. (2.) That he could not be benefited by their sacrifices. Their goodness of this kind could not possibly extend unto him, neither, if they were in this matter righteous, was he the better, ver. 13. *Will I eat the flesh of bulls?* It is as absurd to think that their sacrifices could of themselves, and by virtue of any innate excellency in them, add any pleasure or praise to God, as it would be to imagine that an infinite Spirit could be supported by meat and drink as our bodies are. It is said indeed of the demons whom the Gentiles worshipped, that they did eat of the fat of the sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings, *Dent. xxxii. 38.* they regaled themselves in the homage they robbed the true God of; but will the great Jehovah be thus entertained? no, *to obey is better than sacrifice,* and to love God and our neighbour, *better than all burnt offerings.* So much better, that God by his prophets often told them that their sacrifices were not only not acceptable, but abominable to him, while they lived in sin; instead of pleasing him, he looked upon them as a mockery, and therefore an affront and provocation to him, see *Prov. xv. 8. Isa. i. 11. &c.—lxvi. 3. Jer. xvi. 20. Amos v. 21.* They are therefore here warned not to rest in these performances; but to carry themselves in all other instances towards God as their God.

(2.) This may be considered as looking forward to the abolishing of these by the gospel of Christ. Thus Dr. Hammond understands it. When God shall set up the kingdom of the Messiah, he shall abolish the old way of worship by sacrifice and offerings, he will no more have those to be continually



nally before him, ver. 8. he will no more require of his worshippers to bring him their bullocks and their goats to be burnt upon his altar, ver. 9. For indeed he never appointed this as that which he had any need of, or took any pleasure in, for, besides that all we have is his already, he has far more beasts in the forest, and upon the mountains, which we know nothing of, nor have any property in, than we have in our flocks; but he instituted it to prefigure the great sacrifice which his own Son should in the fulness of time offer upon the cross, to make atonement for sin, and all the other spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, with which God through Christ will be well-pleased.

3. He directs to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise, as those which under the law were preferred before all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and on which then the greatest stress was laid, and which now under the gospel come in the room of those carnal ordinances, which were imposed until the times of reformation. He sheweth us here, ver. 14, 15, what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept when sacrifices are slighted and superseded. (1.) We must make a penitent acknowledgment of our sins; offer to God confession, so some read it, and understand it of the confession of sin, in order to our giving glory to God, and taking shame to ourselves, that we may never return to it: *A broken and contrite heart is the sacrifice which God will not despise*, Psalm li. 17. If the sin were not abandoned, the sin-offering was not accepted. (2.) We must give God thanks for his mercies to us: offer to God thanksgiving every day, often every day, *seven times a day will I praise thee*, and upon special occasions, and this shall please the Lord, if it come from an humble thankful heart, full of love to him, and joy in him, *better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs*, Psalm lxxix. 30, 31. (3.) We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him; *Pay thy vows to the most High*, forsake thy sins, and do thy duty better, pursuant to the solemn promises thou hast made him to that purpose. When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received, we must be sure to pay the vows we made to him when we were in the pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted. Dr. Hammond applies this to the great gospel ordinance of the eucharist, in which we are to give thanks to God for his great love in sending his Son to save us, and to pay our vows of love and duty to him, and to give alms. Instead of all the Old Testament types of a Christ to come, we have that blessed memorial of a Christ already come. (4.) In the day of distress we must apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, ver. 15. *Call upon me in the day of trouble*, and not upon any other God: Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him. We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. This is a cheaper, easier, readier way of seeking his favour, than by a peace-offering, and yet more acceptable. (5.) When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him, not only by a grateful mention of his favour, but by living to his praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God; meeting him with our prayers when he afflicts us, and with our praises when he delivers us.

16. But unto the wicked God faith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? 17. Seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee. 18. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. 19. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. 20. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. 21. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. 23. Who so offereth praise, glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.

God, by the psalmist, having instructed his people, in the right way of worshipping him, and keeping up their communion with him, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they were such as professed the Jewish or the Christian religion; hypocrisy is wickedness, for which God will judge. Observe here,

1. The charge drawn up against them.

(1.) They are charged with invading and usurping the honours and privileges of religion, ver. 16. *What hast thou to do, O wicked man, to declare my statutes?* This is a challenge to those that are really profane, but seemingly godly, to shew what title they have to the cloak of religion, and by what authority they wear it, when they use it only to cover and conceal the abominable impieties of their hearts and lives: Let them make out their claim to it if they can: some think it points prophetically at the Scribes and Pharisees, that were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church, at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and that evangelical way of worship spoken of in the foregoing verses, were to be set up. They violently opposed that great revolution, and used all the power and interest which they had by sitting in Moses's seat to hinder it: but the account which our blessed Saviour gives of them, *Matt. xxiii.* and *St. Paul, Rom. ii. 21, 22.* make this expostulation here agree very well to them. They took on them to declare God's statutes, but they hated Christ's instruction, and therefore what had they to do to expound the law, who reject the gospel? But it is applicable to all those that are practisers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be preachers of it. Note, It is very absurd in itself, and a great affront to the God of heaven, for those that are wicked and ungodly to declaim his statutes, and to take his covenant into their mouths: It is very possible, and too common for those that declare God's statutes to others, to live in disobedience to them themselves; and for those that take God's covenant in their mouths, yet in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and death; but they are guilty of an usurpation, they take to themselves an honour which they have no title to, and there is a day coming when they will be thrust out as intruders, *Friend, how comest thou in hither?*

(2.) They are charged with transgressing and violating the laws and precepts of religion.

(1.) They are charged with a daring contempt of the word of God, ver. 17. *Thou hatest instruction.* They loved to give instruction, and to tell others what they should do, for this fed their pride, and made them look great,

VOL. 11. No. LXXXIV.\*

and by this craft they got their living; but they hated to receive instruction from God himself, for that would be a check upon them, and a mortification to them: Thou hatest discipline, the reproofs of the word, and the rebukes of providence. Those that hate to be reformed, no wonder they hate the means of reformation: *Thou castest my words behind thee.* They seemed to set God's words before them, when they sat in Moses's seat, and undertook to teach others out of the law, *Rom. ii. 19.* but in their conversations they cast God's words behind them, and did not care for seeing that rule which they were resolved not to be ruled by. This is despising the commandment of the Lord. (2.) A close confederacy with the worst of sinners, ver. 18. *When thou sawest a thief*, instead of reproving him and witnessing against him, as those should do that declare God's statutes, thou consentedst with him, didst approve of his practices, and desire to come in partner with him, and to share in the profits of his cursed trade; and *thou hast been partaker with adulterers*, hast done as they did, and encouraged them to go on in their wicked courses; hast done these things, and hast had pleasure in them that do them, *Rom. i. 32.*

(3.) A constant persisting in the worst of tongue sins, ver. 19. *Thou givest thy mouth to evil*; not only allowest thyself in, but addichest thyself wholly to all manner of evil speaking. (1.) Lying: *Thy tongue frameth deceit*, which notes contrivance and deliberation in lying: It knits or links deceit, so some. One lie begets another, and one fraud requires another to cover it. (2.) Slandering, ver. 20. *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother*, dost basely abuse and misrepresent him; magistrally judge and censure him, and pass sentence upon him, as if thou wert his master to whom he must stand or fall, whereas he is thy brother, as good as thou art, and upon the level with thee, for he is thy own mother's son. He is thy near relation, whom thou oughtest to love, to vindicate, and stand up for, if others abused him yet thou dost thyself abuse him, whose faults thou oughtest to cover and make the best of; if really he had done amiss, yet thou dost most falsely and unjustly charge him with that which he is innocent of; thou sittest and doest this, as a judge upon the bench with authority; thou sittest in the seat of the scornful, to deride and backbite those whom thou oughtest to respect and be kind to. Those that do ill themselves, commonly delight in speaking ill of others.

2. The proof of this charge, ver. 21. *These things thou hast done*; the fact is too plain to be denied, the fault too bad to be excused; these things, God knows, and thy own heart knows, thou hast done. The sins of sinners will be proved upon them beyond contradiction in the judgment of the great day. *I will reprove thee*, or convince thee, so that thou shalt have not one word to say for thyself. The day is coming when impenitent sinners will have their mouths for ever stopped, and be struck speechless. What confusion will they be filled with, when God shall set their sins in order before their eyes! They would not see their sins to their humiliation, but cast them behind their backs, covered them, and endeavoured to forget them, nor would they suffer their own consciences to put them in mind of them; but the day is coming, when God will make them see their sins to their everlasting shame and terror: he will set them in order, original sin, actual sins, sins against the law, sins against the gospel; against the first table, against the second table: sins of childhood and youth, of riper age, and old age. He will set them in order, as the witnesses are set in order, and called in order against the criminal, and asked what they have to say against him.

3. The judge's patience, and the sinners abuse of that patience: I kept silence, did not give thee any disturbance in thy sinful way, but let thee alone to take thy course; sentence against thine evil works was respited, and not executed speedily. Note, The patience of God is very great towards provoking sinners. He sees their sins, and hates them: it would be neither difficult nor damage to him to punish them, and yet he waits to be gracious, and gives them space to repent, that he may render them inexcusable if they repent not. His patience is the more wonderful, because the sinner makes such an ill use of it; *Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself*, as weak and forgetful as thyself, as false to my word as thyself; nay, as much a friend to sin as thyself: Sinners take God's silence for consent, and his patience for connivance; and therefore the longer they are reprieved, the more are their hearts hardened; but if they turn not, they shall be made to see their error when it is too late, and that the God they provoke is just, and holy, and terrible, and not such a one as themselves.

4. The fair warning given of the dreadful doom of hypocrites, ver. 22. *Now consider this, ye that forget God.* Consider that God knows and keeps account of all your sins, that he will call you to an account for them; that patience abused will turn into the greater wrath; that though you forget God and your duty to him, he will not forget you and your rebellions against him; consider this in time, before it be too late; for if these things be not considered, and the consideration of them improved, he will *tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver.* It is the doom of hypocrites to be *cut in sunder*, *Matt. xxiv. 51.* Note, (1.) Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked. They that know God, and yet do not obey him, do certainly forget him. (2.) Those that forget God, forget themselves; and it will never be right with them till they consider and recover themselves. Consideration is the first step towards conversion. (3.) Those that will not consider the warnings of God's word, will certainly be torn in pieces by the execution of his wrath. (4.) When God comes to tear sinners in pieces, there is no delivering them out of his hand. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can any friend they have in the world deliver them.

5. Full instructions given to us all how to prevent this fearful doom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, we have it, ver. 23. which directs us what to do, that we may attain our chief end.

(1.) Man's chief end is to glorify God, and we are here told, that whose offers praise glorifies him, whether he be Jew or Gentile, whose spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted from him. We must praise God, and we must sacrifice praise, direct it to God: as every sacrifice was: put it into the hands of the priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the altar, see that it be made by fire, sacred fire, that it be kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection; we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord. And this he is pleased in infinite condescension to interpret as the glorifying him. Hereby we give him the glory due to his name, and do what we can to advance the interests of his kingdom among men.

(2.) Man's chief end in conjunction with this, is to enjoy God; and we are here told, that those who order their conversation aright shall see his salvation. (1.) It is not enough for us to offer praise, but we must withal order our conversation aright. Thanksgiving is good, but thanks living is better. (2.) Those that would have their conversation right, must take care and pains to order it; to dispose it according to rule; to understand their way, and to direct it. (3.) Those that take care of their conversation make sure their salvation; then God will make to see his salvation; for it is a salvation ready to be revealed; he will make them to see it, and enjoy it, to see it, and make themselves happy for ever in it. Note, The right ordering of the conversation is the only way, and it is a sure way to obtain the great salvation.

X X

PSALM



P S A L M LI.

Though David penned this psalm upon a very particular occasion, yet it is of as general use as any of David's psalms; it is the most eminent of the penitential psalms, and most expressive of the care and desires of a repenting sinner. It is pity indeed that in our devout addresses to God we should have any thing else to do but to praise God, for that is the work of heaven, but we make other work for ourselves, by our own sins and follies; we must come to the throne of grace in the posture of penitents to confess our sins, and sue for the grace of God, and if therein we would take with us words, we can no where find any more apposite than in this psalm, which is the record of David's repentance for his sin in the matter of Uriah, which was the greatest blemish upon his character; all the rest of his faults were nothing to this; it is said of him, 1 Kings xv. 5. That he turned not aside from the commandment of the Lord all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. In this psalm (1.) He confesseth his sin, ver. 3-6. (2.) He prays earnestly for the pardon of his sin, ver. 1, 2-7-8. (3.) For peace of conscience, ver. 8-12. (4.) For grace to go and sin no more, ver. 10, 11-14. (5.) For liberty of access to God, ver. 15. (6.) He promised to do what he could for the good of the souls of others, ver. 13. and for the glory of God, ver. 16, 17-19. And lastly, concludes with a prayer for Zion and Jerusalem, ver. 18. Those whose consciences charge them with any gross sin, should with a believing regard to Jesus Christ, the Mediator, again and again pray over this psalm; nay, though we have not been guilty of adultery and murder, or any the like enormous crime, yet in singeing it, and praying over it, we may very sensibly apply it all to ourselves, which if we do with suitable affections we shall through Christ find mercy to pardon, and grace for seasonable help.

¶ To the chief musician. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1. **H**AVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions: 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

The title has reference to a very sad story, that of David's fall: But though he fell, he was not utterly cast down, for God graciously upheld him, and raised him up. (1.) This sin which in this psalm he laments was the folly and wickedness he committed with his neighbour's wife; a sin not to be spoken of or thought of, without detestation. His debauching Bathsheba was the inlet of all the other sins that followed; it was as the letting forth of water. This sin of David's is recorded for warning to all, that he that thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall. (2.) The repentance in this psalm he expressed he was brought to by the ministry of Nathan, who was sent of God to convince him of his sin, after he had continued above nine months (for ought appears) without any particular expressions of remorse and sorrow for it. But though God, may suffer his people to fall into sin, and to lie a great while in it, yet he will by some means or other recover them to repentance, bring them to himself, and to their right mind again. Herein ordinarily he useth the ministry of the word, which yet he is not tied to: But those that have been overtaken in any fault, ought to reckon a faithful reproof the greatest kindness that can be done them, and a wife reproof their best friend. Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be excellent oil. (3.) David being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backslidden, and who alone can heal their backslidings? (4.) What were the workings of his heart towards God upon this occasion, by divine inspiration he drew up into a psalm, that it might be often repeated, and long after reviewed; and this he committed to the chief musician, to be sung in the public service of the church. (1.) As a profession of his own repentance, which he would have to be generally taken notice of; his sin having been notorious, that the plaster might be as wide as the wound. Those that truly repent of their sins, will not be ashamed to own their repentance; but having lost the honour of innocents, will rather covet the honour of penitents. (2.) As a pattern to others, both to bring them to repentance by his example, and to instruct them in their repentance, what to do, and what to say. Being converted himself, he thus strengthens his brethren, Luke xxii. 32. and for this cause he obtained mercy, 1 Tim. i. 16.

In these words we have,

1. David's humble petition, ver. 1, 2. His prayer is much the same with that which our Saviour puts into the mouth of his penitent publican in the parable, God be merciful to me a sinner! Luke xviii. 13. David was upon many accounts a man of great merit; he had not only done much but suffered much, in the cause of God: and yet when he is convinced of sin, he doth not offer to balance his evil deeds with his good deeds, nor can he think that his services will atone for his offences; but he flies to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace. Have mercy upon me, O God. He owns himself obnoxious to God's justice, and therefore casts himself upon his mercy; and it is certain the best man in the world is undone, if God be not merciful to him. Observe,

(1.) What his plea is for this mercy. Have mercy upon me, O God, not according to the dignity of my birth, as descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, not according to my public services as Israel's champion, or my public honours as Israel's king; his plea is not, Lord, remember David in all his afflictions, how he vowed to build a place for the ark, Psal. cxxxii. 1; 2. A true penitent will make no mention of any such thing; but have mercy upon me for mercy's sake. I have nothing to plead with thee but, (1.) The freeness of thy mercy, according to thy loving kindness, thy clemency, the goodness of thy nature, which inclines thee to pity the miserable. (2.) The fulness of thy mercy. There is in thee not only loving-kindness and tender mercies, but abundance of it, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners, of many sins, to multiply pardons as we multiply transgressions.

(2.) What is the particular mercy he begs; the pardon of sin: Blot out

my transgressions, as a debt is blotted or crossed out of the book, when either the debtor has paid it, or the debtor has remitted it: wipe out my transgressions, that they may not appear to demand judgment against me, nor stare me in the face to my confusion and terror. The blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify and pacify, that, blots out the transgression, and being reconciled to God, reconciles us to ourselves, ver. 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity; wash my soul from the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace; for it is only from a ceremonial pollution, that the water of separation will avail to cleanse me. Multiply to wash me; the stain is deep, for I have lain long soaking in the guilt, so that it will not easily be got out: O wash me much, wash me thoroughly; cleanse me from my sin. Sin defiles us, renders us odious in the sight of a holy God, and uneasy to ourselves; it disfits us for communion with God in grace or glory; when God pardons sin, he cleanseth us from it, so that we become acceptable to him, easy to ourselves, and have liberty of access to him. Nathan had assured David, upon his first profession of repentance, that his sin was pardoned, The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die, 2 Sam. xii. 13, yet he prays, Wash me, cleanse me, blot out my transgressions; for God will be sought unto, even for that which he has promised; and those whose sins are pardoned, must pray that the pardon may be more and more cleared up to them. God hath forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself; and therefore he is thus importunate for pardon, as one that thought himself unworthy of it, and knew how to value it.

2. David's penitential confessions, ver. 3, 4, 5. (1.) He was very free to own his guilt before God; I acknowledge my transgressions; this he had formerly found the only way of easing his conscience, Psal. xxxii. 4, 5. Nathan said, Thou art the man? and so I am, saith David; I have sinned. (2.) He had such a deep sense of it, that he was continually thinking of it with sorrow and shame. His contrition for his sin was not a slight sudden passion, but an abiding grief; my sin is ever before me, to humble me and mortify me, and make me continually blush and tremble. It is ever against me; so some: I see it before as an enemy, accusing and threatening me. David was upon all occasions put in mind of his sin, and was willing to be so for his further abasement. He never walked on the roof of his house without a penitent reflection of his unhappy walk there, when from thence he saw Bathsheba; never lay down to sleep without a sorrowful thought of the bed of his uncleanness; never set down to meat, never sent his servant on an errand, or took his pen in hand, but it put him in mind of his making Uriah drunk, the treacherous message he sent by him, and the fatal warrant he wrote and signed for his execution. Note, The acts of repentance, even for the same sin, must be often repeated: It will be of good use for us to have our sins ever before us, that by the remembrance of our past sins we may be kept humble, may be armed against temptation, quickened to duty, and made patient under the cross.

(1.) He confesseth his actual transgressions, ver. 4. Against thee, thee only have I sinned. David was a very great man, and yet having done amiss, submits to the discipline of a penitent, and thinks not his royal dignity will excuse him from it. Rich and poor must here meet together; there is one law of repentance for both; the greatest must be judged shortly, and therefore must judge themselves now. David was a very good man, and yet having sinned, he willingly accommodates himself to the place, and posture of a penitent. The best men, if they sin, should give the best example of repentance.

(1.) His confession is particular: I have done this evil, this that I am now reproved for, that my own conscience now upbraids me with. Not, it is good to be particular in the confession of sin, that we may be the more express in praying for pardon, and so may have the more comfort in it. We ought to reflect upon the particular heads of our sins of infirmity, and the particular circumstances of our gross sins.

(1.) He aggravates the sin which he confesseth, and lays load upon himself for it; Against thee, and in thy sight. Hence our Saviour seems to borrow the confession which in the parable he puts into the mouth of the returning prodigal; I have sinned against heaven and before thee, Luke xv. 18. Two things David laments in his sin (1.) That it was committed to God. To him the affront is given, and he is the party wronged. It is his truth, that by wilful sin we deny; his conduct that we despise; his command that we disobey; his promise that we distrust; his name that we dishonour; and it is with him that we deal deceitfully and dishonestly. From this topic Joseph fetched the great argument against sin, Gen. xxxix. 9. and David here the great aggravation of it; against thee only. Some make this to speak the prerogative of his crown, that as a king he was not accountable to any but God; but it is more agreeable to his present temper to suppose, that it speaks the deep contrition of his soul for his sin, and that it was upon right grounds. He here sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, against his own soul and body and family; against his kingdom, and against the church of God; and all this helped to humble him; but none of those were sinned against so as God was: and therefore this he lays the most sorrowful accent upon: Against thee only have I sinned. (2.) That it was committed in God's sight; this not only proves it upon me, but renders it exceeding sinful. This should greatly humble us for all our sins, that we have been committing under the eye of God, which argues either a disbelief of his omniscience, or a contempt of his justice.

(3.) He justifies God in the sentence passed upon him, for that the sword shall never depart from his house, 2 Sam. xii. 10, 11. He is very forward to own his sin and aggravate it, not only that he might obtain the pardon of it himself, but that by his confession he might give honour to God, (1.) That God might be justified in the threatening he had spoken by Nathan; Lord, I have nothing to say against the justice of them; I deserve what is threatened, and a thousand times worse. Thus Eli acquiesced in the like threatenings, 1 Sam. iii. 18. It is the Lord. And Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 19. Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. (2.) That God may be clear when he judgeth, i. e. when he executes those threatenings. David published his confession of sin, that when hereafter he shall come into trouble, none might say God had done him any wrong; for he owns the Lord is righteous; thus will all true penitents justify God by condemning themselves; Thou art just in all that is brought upon us.

(2.) He confesseth his original corruption, ver. 5. Behold I was shapen in iniquity. He doth not call upon God to behold it, but upon himself. Come, my soul, look unto the rock out of which I was hewn, and thou wilt find I was shapen in iniquity. Had I duly considered this before, I find I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such tinder in my heart; and so the sin might have been prevented; but let me consider it now, not to excuse or extenuate the sin; Lord, I did so; but indeed I could not help it; my inclination led me to it. For as that plea is false, with due care and watchfulness, and improvement of the grace of God, he might have helped it; so it is what a true penitent never offers to put in: But let me consider it rather as an aggravation of the sin; Lord, I have not only been guilty of adultery and murder, but I have an adulterous murderous nature; therefore I abhor myself. David elsewhere speaks of the admirable structure of his body, Psal. cxxxix. 14, 15. It was curiously wrought, and yet here he saith it was shapen in iniquity, sin was twisted in with it: not as it came out of God's hands;



hands; but as it comes through our parents loins. He elsewhere speaks of the piety of his mother, that she was God's handmaid, and he pleads his relation to her, *Psal. cxvi. 16. lxxxvi. 16.* and yet he here saith, *the conceived him in sin*; for though she was by grace a child of God, she was by nature a daughter of Eve, and not excepted from the common character. Note, It is to be sadly lamented by every one of us, that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude: we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call original sin, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, that proneness to evil and backwardness to good, which is the burden of the regenerate, and the ruin of the unregenerate; it is a bent to backslide from God.

3. David's acknowledgement of the grace of God, *ver. 6.* both his good will towards us; *thou desirest truth in the inward parts*; thou wouldst have us all honest and sincere, and true to our profession; and his good work in us. In the hidden part thou hast made, or shalt make me to know wisdom. Note, 1. Truth and wisdom will go very far towards making a man a good man. A clear head and a sound heart bespeak the man of God perfect; sincerity and prudence. 2. What God requires of us, he himself works in us, and he works us in the regular way, enlightening the mind, and so gaining the will. But how doth this come in here? (1.) God is hereby justified and cleared; Lord, thou wast not the author of my sin; there is no blame to be laid upon thee; but I alone must bear it; for thou hast many a time admonished me to be sincere, and hast made me to know that which if I had duly considered would have prevented my falling into this sin; had I improved the grace thou hast given me, I had kept integrity. (2.) The sin is hereby aggravated; Lord, thou desirest truth, but where was it when I dissembled with Uriah? *Thou hast made me to know wisdom*; but I have not lived up to what I have known. (3.) He is hereby encouraged in his repentance to hope that God would graciously accept of him; for, 1. God hath made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly again; *thou desirest truth in the inward part*; this is that which God hath an eye to in a returning sinner, that in his spirit there be no guile, *Psal. xxxii. 2.* And David was conscious to himself of the uprightness of his heart towards God in his repentance, and therefore doubted not but God would accept him. 2. He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions, that in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the *hidden man of the heart*, 1 Pet. iii. 4. he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter another time. Some read it as a prayer; Lord, in this instance I have done foolishly, for the future make me to know wisdom. Where there is truth, God will give wisdom; those that sincerely endeavour to do their duty, shall be taught their duty.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8. Make me to hear joy and gladness: that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy holy Spirit from me. 12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free Spirit. 13. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

See here, (1.) What David prays for, many excellent petitions he here puts up; to which if we do but add for Christ's sake, they are as evangelicals any other.

1. He prays that God would cleanse him from his sins, and the defilement he had contracted by them, *ver. 7.* *Purge me with hyssop, i. e.* Pardon my sins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be restored to those privileges which by sin I had forfeited and lost. The expression here alludes to a ceremonial distinction, that of cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean by the touch of a body, by sprinkling water, or blood, or both upon them with a bunch of hyssop, by which they were at length discharged from the restraints they were laid under by their pollution: Lord let me be as well assured of my restoration to thy favour, and to the privilege of communion with thee, as they were thereby assured of their re-admission to their former privileges. But it is founded upon gospel grace; *Purge me with hyssop, i. e.* with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. It is the blood of Christ, which is therefore called the *blood of sprinkling*, Heb. xii. 24. that purgeth the conscience from dead works, from that guilt of sin, and dread of God, which shuts us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body under the law shut a man out from the courts of God's house. If this blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, then we shall be clean indeed, Heb. x. 2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow; not only acquitted, but accepted; so those are that are justified, *Ihu. i. 18.* *Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.*

2. He prays that his sins be pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted till first he is cleansed: but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, *make me to hear joy and gladness*, *ver. 8. i. e.* let me have a well-grounded peace of thy creating, thy speaking, so that the bones which thou hast broken by convictions and threatenings may rejoice, may not only be set again, and eased from the pain, but may be sensibly comforted, and, as the prophet speaks, may flourish as an herb. Note, (1.) The pain of an heart truly broken for sin, may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same Spirit who as a Spirit of bondage smites and wounds, and as a Spirit of adoption heals and binds up. (2.) The comfort and joy that ariseth from a sealed pardon to a penitent sinner is as refreshing as perfect ease from the most exquisite pain. (3.) It is God's work not only to speak this joy and gladness, but to make us hear it, and take the comfort of it. He earnestly desires that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and so put a gladness into his heart; that he would not only be reconciled to him; but, which is a further act of grace, let him know that he was so.

(3.) He prays for a complete and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for, as the foundation of his comfort, *ver. 9.* *Hide thy face from my sins*, i. e. be not provoked by them to deal with me as I deserve; they are ever before me, let them be cast behind thy back; blot out all mine iniquities out of the book of thine account, blot them out

as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun, *Ihu. xlv. 22.*

4. He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for as for pardon and peace, *ver. 10.* He doth not pray, Lord, preserve me my reputation, as Saul *I have sinned, yet honour me before this people*: No, his great concern is to get his corrupt nature changed: the sin he had been guilty of, was (1.) An evidence of its impurity, and therefore he prays, *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* He now saw more than ever what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his own power to amend it, and therefore begs of God (whose prerogative it is to create) that he would create in him a clean heart. He only that made the heart can new make it; and to his power nothing is impossible: He created the world by the word of his power, as the God of nature, and it is by the word of his power as the God of grace, that we are clean, *John xv. 3.* that we are sanctified, *John xvii. 17.* (2.) It was the cause of its disorder, and undid much of the good work that had been wrought in him, and therefore he prays, *Lord, renew a right spirit within me*; repair the decays of spiritual strength, which this sin has been the cause of, and set me to rights again. Renew a constant spirit within me; so some. He had in this matter discovered much inconsistency and disagreeableness with himself, and therefore prays, *Lord fix me for the time to come*, that I may never in like manner depart from thee.

5. He prays for the continuance of God's good will towards him, and the progress of his good work in him, *ver. 11.* (1.) That he might never be shut out from God's favour. *Cast me not away from thy presence*, as one whom thou abhorrest and canst not endure to look upon. He prays, that he might not be thrown out of God's protection, but that wherever he went he might have the divine presence with him, might be under the conduct of his wisdom, and in the custody of his power; and that he might not be forbidden communion with God: Let me not be banished thy courts, but always have liberty of access to thee by prayer. He doth not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him, God's will be done; but Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. If the sword come into my house never to depart from it, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and I am well enough. (2.) That he might never be deprived of God's grace; *Take not thy holy Spirit from me.* He knew he had by his sin grieved the Spirit and provoked him to withdraw; and that because he also is flesh, God might justly have said that his Spirit should not more strive with him or work upon him, *Gen. vi. 3.* This he dreads more than any thing; we are undone if God takes his holy Spirit from us. Saul was a sad instance of this: How exceeding sinful, how exceedingly miserable was he, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him! David knew it, and therefore begs most earnestly, Lord, whatever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet *take not thy holy Spirit from me.* (See 2 Sam. vii. 15.) but continue thy holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty both as a prince and as a psalmist.

6. He prays for the restoration of divine comforts, and the perpetual communications of divine grace, *ver. 12.* David finds the ill effects of his sin: (1.) It had made him sad, and therefore he prays, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.* A child of God knows no true nor solid joy but the joy of God's salvation, joy in God his Saviour, and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy, and deprive ourselves of it; our evidences cannot but be clouded and our hopes shaken; when we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But when we truly repent, we may pray and hope that God will restore to us those joys. They that sow in penitential tears shall reap in the joys of God's salvation, when the times of refreshing shall come. (2.) It had made him weak, and therefore he prays, *uphold me with thy free Spirit*: I am ready to fall, either into sin or into despair, Lord sustain me: my own spirit (though the spirit of a man will go far towards the sustaining his infirmity) is not sufficient, but if I be left to myself, I shall certainly sink, therefore uphold me with thy Spirit, let him counter-work the evil spirit that would cast me down from mine excellency. Thy Spirit is a free spirit, a free agent himself, working freely; and that makes those free whom he works in, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; thy ingenuous and free Spirit; He was conscious to himself of his acting very disingenuously in the matter of Uriah, and unlike a prince; that his behaviour was base and paltry; Lord, saith he, let thy spirit inspire my soul with noble and generous principles, that I may always act as becomes me. A free spirit will be a firm and fixed spirit, and will uphold us. The more cheerful we are in our duty, the more constant we shall be to it.

(2.) See what David here promiseth, *ver. 13.* Observe, (1.) What good work he promiseth God to do; *I will teach transgressors thy ways.* David had been himself a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves having himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance, to teach others God's ways, i. e. our way to God by repentance; he would teach others that had sinned, to take the same course that he had taken, to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God's face; and God's way towards us in pardoning mercy, how ready he is to receive those that return to him. He taught the former by his own example for the direction of sinners in repenting: He taught the latter by his own experience for their encouragement. By this psalm he is and will be to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. Note, Penitents should be preachers; Solomon was so, and blessed Paul. (2.) What good effect he promiseth himself from his doing this; *Sinners shall be converted unto thee*, and shall never persist in their wanderings from thee, nor despair of finding mercy in their returns to thee. The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors is their conversion to God, that is a happy point gained, and happy they that are instrumental to contribute towards it, *James v. 20.*

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. 15. O LORD, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. 16. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. 17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.



## PSALM LI.

Though David penned this psalm upon a very particular occasion, yet it is of as general use as any of David's psalms; it is the most eminent of the penitential psalms, and most expressive of the cares and desires of a repenting sinner. It is pity indeed that in our devout addresses to God we should have any thing else to do but to praise God, for that is the work of heaven, but we make other work for ourselves, by our own sins and follies; we must come to the throne of grace in the posture of penitents to confess our sins, and sue for the grace of God, and if therein we would take with us words, we can nowhere find any more apposite than in this psalm, which is the record of David's repentance for his sin in the matter of Uriah, which was the greatest blemish upon his character; all the rest of his faults were nothing to this; it is said of him, 1 Kings xv. 5. That he turned not aside from the commandment of the Lord all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. In this psalm (1.) He confesseth his sin, ver. 3—6. (2.) He prays earnestly for the pardon of his sin, ver. 1, 2—7—8. (3.) For peace of conscience, ver. 8—12. (4.) For grace to go and sin no more, ver. 10, 11—14. (5.) For liberty of access to God, ver. 15. (6.) He promised to do what he could for the good of the souls of others, ver. 13. and for the glory of God, ver. 16, 17—19. And lastly, concludes with a prayer for Sion and Jerusalem, ver. 18. Those whose consciences charge them with any gross sin, should with a believing regard to Jesus Christ, the Mediator, again and again pray over this psalm; nay, though we have not been guilty of adultery and murder, or any the like enormous crime, yet in singing it, and praying over it, we may very sensibly apply it all to ourselves, which if we do with suitable affections we shall through Christ find mercy to pardon, and grace for seasonable help.

¶ To the chief musician. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1. **H**AVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions: 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. 5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

The title has reference to a very sad story, that of David's fall: But though he fell, he was not utterly cast down, for God graciously upheld him, and raised him up. (1.) This sin which in this psalm he laments was the folly and wickedness he committed with his neighbour's wife; a sin not to be spoken of or thought of, without detestation. His debauching Bathsheba was the inlet of all the other sins that followed; it was as the letting forth of water. This sin of David's is recorded for warning to all, that he that thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall. (2.) The repentance in this psalm he expressed he was brought to by the ministry of Nathan, who was sent of God to convince him of his sin, after he had continued above nine months (for ought appears) without any particular expressions of remorse and sorrow for it. But though God, may suffer his people to fall into sin, and to lie a great while in it, yet he will by some means or other recover them to repentance, bring them to himself, and to their right mind again. Herein ordinarily he useth the ministry of the word, which yet he is not tied to: But those that have been overtaken in any fault, ought to reckon a faithful reproof the greatest kindness that can be done them, and a wise reprover their best friend. Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be excellent oil. (3.) David being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backsliden, and who alone can heal their backslidings? (4.) What were the workings of his heart towards God upon this occasion, by divine inspiration he drew up into a psalm, that it might be often repeated, and long after reviewed; and this he committed to the chief musician, to be sung in the public service of the church. (1.) As a profession of his own repentance, which he would have to be generally taken notice of; his sin having been notorious, that the plaster might be as wide as the wound. Those that truly repent of their sins, will not be ashamed to own their repentance; but having lost the honour of innocents, will rather covet the honour of penitents. (2.) As a pattern to others, both to bring them to repentance by his example, and to instruct them in their repentance, what to do, and what to say. Being converted himself, he thus strengthens his brethren, Luke xxii. 32. and for this cause he obtained mercy, 1 Tim. i. 16.

In these words we have,

1. David's humble petition, ver. 1, 2. His prayer is much the same with that which our Saviour puts into the mouth of his penitent publican in the parable, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Luke xviii. 13. David was upon many accounts a man of great merit; he had not only done much but suffered much, in the cause of God: and yet when he is convinced of sin, he doth not offer to balance his evil deeds with his good deeds, nor can he think that his services will atone for his offences; but he flies to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* He owns himself obnoxious to God's justice, and therefore calls himself upon his mercy; and it is certain the best man in the world is undone, if God be not merciful to him. Observe,

(1.) What his plea is for this mercy. *Have mercy upon me, O God,* not according to the dignity of my birth, as descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, not according to my public services as Israel's champion, or my public honours as Israel's king; his plea is not, Lord, remember David in all his afflictions, how he vowed to build a place for thee, *Psal. cxxxii. 1, 2.* A true penitent will make no mention of any such thing; but have mercy upon me for mercy's sake. I have nothing to plead with thee but, (1.) The freeness of thy mercy, according to thy loving kindness, thy clemency, the goodness of thy nature, which inclines thee to pity the miserable. (2.) The fulness of thy mercy. There is in thee not only loving-kindness and tender mercies, but abundance of it, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners, of many sins, to multiply pardons as we multiply transgressions.

(2.) What is the particular mercy he begs; the pardon of sin: *Blot out*

*my transgressions*, as a debt is blotted or crossed out of the book, when either the debtor has paid it, or the debtor has remitted it: wipe out my transgressions, that they may not appear to demand judgment against me, nor stare me in the face to my confusion and terror. The blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify and pacify; that, blots out the transgression, and being reconciled to God, reconciles us to ourselves, ver. 2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity*; wash my soul from the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace; for it is only from a ceremonial pollution, that the water of separation will avail to cleanse me. Multiply to wash me; the stain is deep, for I have lain long soaking in the guilt, so that it will not easily be got out: O wash me much, wash me thoroughly; *cleanse me from my sin*. Sin defiles us, renders us odious in the sight of a holy God, and uneasy to ourselves; it disfits us for communion with God in grace or glory; when God pardons sin, he cleanseth us from it, so that we become acceptable to him, easy to ourselves, and have liberty of access to him. Nathan had assured David, upon his first profession of repentance, that his sin was pardoned, *The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die*, 2 Sam. xii. 13, yet he prays, *Wash me, cleanse me, blot out my transgressions*; for God will be fought unto, even for that which he has promised; and those whose sins are pardoned, must pray that the pardon may be more and more cleared up to them. God hath forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself; and therefore he is thus importunate for pardon, as one that thought himself unworthy of it, and knew how to value it.

2. David's penitential confessions, ver. 3, 4, 5. (1.) He was very free to own his guilt before God; *I acknowledge my transgressions*; this he had formerly found the only way of easing his conscience, *Psal. xxxii. 4, 5.* Nathan said, *Thou art the man?* and so I am, saith David; *I have sinned*, (2.) He had such a deep sense of it, that he was continually thinking of it with sorrow and shame. His contrition for his sin was not a slight sudden passion, but an abiding grief; *my sin is ever before me*, to humble me and mortify me, and make me continually blush and tremble. It is ever against me; so some: I see it before as an enemy, accusing and threatening me. David was upon all occasions put in mind of his sin, and was willing to be so for his further abatement. He never walked on the roof of his house without a penitent reflection of his unhappy walk there, when from thence he saw Bathsheba; never lay down to sleep without a sorrowful thought of the bed of his uncleanness; never set down to meat, never sent his servant on an errand, or took his pen in hand, but it put him in mind of his making Uriah drunk, the treacherous message he sent by him, and the fatal warrant he wrote and signed for his execution. Note, The acts of repentance, even for the same sin, must be often repeated: It will be of good use for us to have our sins ever before us, that by the remembrance of our past sins we may be kept humble, may be armed against temptation, quickened to duty, and made patient under the cross.

(1.) He confesseth his actual transgressions, ver. 4. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned*. David was a very great man, and yet having done amiss, submits to the discipline of a penitent, and thinks not his royal dignity will excuse him from it. Rich and poor must here meet together; there is one law of repentance for both; the greatest must be judged shortly, and therefore must judge themselves now. David was a very good man, and yet having sinned, he willingly accommodates himself to the place, and posture of a penitent. The best men, if they sin, should give the best example of repentance.

(1.) His confession is particular: *I have done this evil*, this that I am now reproved for, that my own conscience now upbraids me with. Not, It is good to be particular in the confession of sin, that we may be the more express in praying for pardon, and so may have the more comfort in it. We ought to reflect upon the particular heads of our sins of infirmity, and the particular circumstances of our gross sins.

(1.) He aggravates the sin which he confesseth, and lays load upon himself for it; *Against thee, and in thy sight*. Hence our Saviour seems to borrow the confession which in the parable he puts into the mouth of the returning prodigal; *I have sinned against heaven and before thee*, Luke xv. 18. Two things David laments in his sin (1.) That it was committed to God. To him the affront is given, and he is the party wronged. It is his truth, that by wilful sin we deny; his conduct that we despise; his command that we disobey; his promise that we distrust; his name that we dishonour; and it is with him that we deal deceitfully and dishonestly. From this topic Joseph fetched the great argument against sin, *Gen. xxxix. 9.* and David here the great aggravation of it; *against thee only*. Some make this to speak the prerogative of his crown, that as a king he was not accountable to any but God; but it is more agreeable to his present temper to suppose, that it speaks the deep contrition of his soul for his sin, and that it was upon right grounds. He here sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, against his own soul and body, and family; against his kingdom, and against the church of God; and all this helped to humble him; but none of those were sinned against so as God was: and therefore this he lays the most sorrowful accent upon: *Against thee only have I sinned*. (2.) That it was committed in God's sight; this not only proves it upon me, but renders it exceeding sinful. This should greatly humble us for all our sins, that we have been committing under the eye of God, which argues either a disbelief of his omniscience, or a contempt of his justice.

(3.) He justifies God in the sentence passed upon him, for that *the sword shall never depart from his house*, 2 Sam. xii. 10, 11. He is very forward to own his sin and aggravate it, not only that he might obtain the pardon of it himself, but that by his confession he might give honour to God, (1.) That God might be justified in the threatening he had spoken by Nathan; Lord, I have nothing to say against the justice of them; I deserve what is threatened, and a thousand times worse. Thus Eli acquiesced in the like threatenings, 1 Sam. iii. 18. *It is the Lord*. And Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 19. *Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken*. (2.) That God may be clear when he judgeth, i. e. when he executes those threatenings. David published his confession of sin, that when hereafter he shall come into trouble, none might say God had done him any wrong; for he owns the Lord is righteous; thus will all true penitents justify God by condemning themselves; *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us*.

(2.) He conselleth his original corruption, ver. 5. *Behold I was shapen in iniquity*. He doth not call upon God to behold it, but upon himself. Come, my soul, look unto the rock out of which I was hewn, and thou wilt find I was shapen in iniquity. Had I duly considered this before, I find I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such thunder in my heart; and so the sin might have been prevented; but let me consider it now, not to excuse or extenuate the sin: Lord, I did so; but indeed I could not help it; my inclination led me to it. For as that plea is false, with due care and watchfulness, and improvement of the grace of God, he might have helped it; so it is what a true penitent never offers to put in: But let me consider it rather as an aggravation of the sin; Lord, I have not only been guilty of adultery and murder, but I have an adulterous murderous nature; therefore I abhor myself. David elsewhere speaks of the admirable structure of his body, *Psal. cxxxix. 14, 15.* It was curiously wrought, and yet here he saith it was shapen in iniquity, sin was twisted in with it: not as it came out of God's hands;



hands; but as it comes through our parents loins. He elsewhere speaks of the piety of his mother, that she was God's handmaid, and he pleads his relation to her, *Psalm* cxvi. 16. lxxxvi. 16. and yet he here saith, *He conceived him in sin*; for though she was by grace a child of God, she was by nature a daughter of Eve, and not excepted from the common character. Note, It is to be sadly lamented by every one of us, that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude: we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call original sin, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, that proneness to evil and backwardness to good, which is the burden of the regenerate, and the ruin of the unregenerate; it is a bent to backslide from God.

3. David's acknowledgement of the grace of God, *ver.* 6. both his good will towards us; *thou desirest truth in the inward parts*; thou wouldst have us all honest and sincere, and true to our profession; and his good work in us. In the hidden part thou hast made, or shalt make me to know wisdom. Note, 1. Truth and wisdom will go very far towards making a man a good man. A clear head and a sound heart bespeak the man of God perfect; sincerity and prudence. 2. What God requires of us, he himself works in us, and he works us in the regular way, enlightening the mind, and so gaining the will. But how doth this come in here? (1.) God is hereby justified and cleared; Lord, thou wast not the author of my sin; there is no blame to be laid upon thee; but I alone must bear it; for thou hast many a time admonished me to be sincere, and hast made me to know that which if I had duly considered would have prevented my falling into this sin; had I improved the grace thou hast given me, I had kept integrity. (2.) The sin is hereby aggravated, Lord, thou desirest truth, but where was it when I dissembled with Uriah? *Thou hast made me to know wisdom*; but I have not lived up to what I have known. (3.) He is hereby encouraged in his repentance to hope that God would graciously accept of him; for, 1. God hath made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly again; *thou desirest truth in the inward part*; this is that which God hath an eye to in a returning sinner, that in his spirit there be no guile, *Psalm* xxxii. 2. And David was conscious to himself of the uprightness of his heart towards God in his repentance, and therefore doubted not but God would accept him. 2. He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions, that in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the hidden man of the heart, 1 *Pet.* iii. 4. he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter another time. Some read it as a prayer; Lord, in this instance I have done foolishly, for the future make me to know wisdom. Where there is truth, God will give wisdom; those that sincerely endeavour to do their duty, shall be taught their duty.

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8. Make me to hear joy and gladness: that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. 9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me. 11. Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy holy Spirit from me. 12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation: and uphold me with thy free Spirit. 13. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

See here, (1.) What David prays for, many excellent petitions he here puts up; to which if we do but add for Christ's sake, they are as evangelical as any other.

1. He prays that God would cleanse him from his sins, and the defilement he had contracted by them, *ver.* 7. *Purge me with hyssop, i. e.* Pardon my sins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be restored to those privileges which by sin I had forfeited and lost. The expression here alludes to a ceremonial distinction, that of cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean by the touch of a body, by sprinkling water, or blood, or both upon them with a bunch of hyssop, by which they were at length discharged from the restraints they were laid under by their pollution: Lord let me be as well assured of my restoration to thy favour, and to the privilege of communion with thee, as they were thereby assured of their re-admission to their former privileges. But it is founded upon gospel grace; *Purge me with hyssop, i. e.* with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. It is the blood of Christ, which is therefore called the blood of sprinkling, *Heb.* xii. 24. that purgeth the consciences from dead works, from that guilt of sin, and dread of God, which shuts us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body under the law shut a man out from the courts of God's house. If this blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, then we shall be clean indeed, *Heb.* x. 2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow; not only acquitted, but accepted; so those are that are justified, *Isa.* i. 18. *Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.*

2. He prays that his sins be pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted till first he is cleansed: but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, *make me to hear joy and gladness*, *ver.* 8. *i. e.* let me have a well-grounded peace of thy creating, thy speaking, so that the bones which thou hast broken by convictions and threatenings may rejoice, may not only be set again, and eased from the pain, but may be sensibly comforted, and, as the prophet speaks, may flourish as an herb. Note, (1.) The pain of an heart truly broken for sin, may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same Spirit who as a Spirit of bondage smites and wounds, and as a Spirit of adoption heals and binds up. (2.) The comfort and joy that ariseth from a sealed pardon to a penitent sinner is as refreshing as perfect ease from the most exquisite pain. (3.) It is God's work not only to speak this joy and gladness, but to make us hear it, and take the comfort of it. He earnestly desires that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and so put a gladness into his heart; that he would not only be reconciled to him, but, which is a further act of grace, let him know that he was so.

(3.) He prays for a complete and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for, as the foundation of his comfort, *ver.* 9. *Hide thy face from my sins, i. e.* be not provoked by them to deal with me as I deserve; they are ever before me, let them be cast behind thy back; blot out all mine iniquities out of the book of thine account, blot them out

as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun, *Isa.* xlii. 22.

4. He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for as for pardon and peace, *ver.* 10. He doth not pray, Lord, preserve me my reputation, as Saul *I have sinned, yet honour me before this people*: No, his great concern is to get his corrupt nature changed: the sin he had been guilty of, was (1.) An evidence of its impurity, and therefore he prays, *Create in me a clean heart, O God*. He now saw more than ever what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his own power to amend it, and therefore begs of God (whose prerogative it is to create) that he would create in him a clean heart. He only that made the heart can now make it; and to his power nothing is impossible: He created the world by the word of his power, as the God of nature, and it is by the word of his power as the God of grace, that we are clean, *John* xv. 3. that we are sanctified, *John* xxi. 17. (2.) It was the cause of its disorder, and undid much of the good work that had been wrought in him, and therefore he prays, *Lord, renew a right spirit within me*; repair the decays of spiritual strength, which this sin has been the cause of, and set me to rights again. Renew a constant spirit within me; so some. He had in this matter discovered much inconsistency and disagreeableness with himself, and therefore prays, Lord fix me for the time to come, that I may never in like manner depart from thee.

5. He prays for the continuance of God's good will towards him, and the progress of his good work in him, *ver.* 11. (1.) That he might never be flung out from God's favour. *Cast me not away from thy presence*, as one whom thou abhorrest and canst not endure to look upon. He prays, that he might not be thrown out of God's protection, but that wherever he went he might have the divine presence with him, might be under the conduct of his wisdom, and in the custody of his power; and that he might not be forbidden communion with God: Let me not be banished thy courts, but always have liberty of access to thee by prayer. He doth not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him, God's will be done; but Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath. If the sword come into my house never to depart from it, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and I am well enough. (2.) That he might never be deprived of God's grace; *Take not thy holy Spirit from me*. He knew he had by his sin grieved the Spirit and provoked him to withdraw; and that because he also is flesh, God might justly have said that his Spirit should not more strive with him or work upon him, *Gen.* vi. 2. This he dreads more than any thing; we are undone if God takes his holy Spirit from us. Saul was a sad instance of this. How exceeding sinful, how exceeding miserable was he, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him! David knew it, and therefore begs most earnestly, Lord, whatever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet take not thy holy Spirit from me. (See 2 *Sam.* vii. 15.) but continue thy holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty both as a prince and as a psalmist.

6. He prays for the restoration of divine comforts, and the perpetual communications of divine grace, *ver.* 12. David finds the ill effects of his sin: (1.) It had made him sad, and therefore he prays, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*. A child of God knows no true nor solid joy but the joy of God's salvation, joy in God his Saviour, and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy, and deprive ourselves of it; our evidences cannot but be clouded and our hopes shaken; when we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But when we truly repent, we may pray and hope that God will restore to us those joys. They that sow in penitential tears shall reap in the joys of God's salvation, when the times of refreshing shall come. (2.) It had made him weak, and therefore he prays, *uphold me with thy free Spirit*: I am ready to fall, either into sin or into despair, Lord sustain me: my own spirit (though the spirit of a man will go far towards the sustaining his infirmity) is not sufficient, but if I be left to myself, I shall certainly sink, therefore uphold me with thy Spirit, let him counter-work the evil spirit that would cast me down from mine excellency. Thy Spirit is a free spirit, a free agent himself, working freely; and that makes those free whom he works upon, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; thy ingenious, thy free Spirit; He was conscious to himself of his acting very disingenuously in the matter of Uriah, and unlike a prince; that his behaviour was base and paltry; Lord, saith he, let thy spirit inspire my soul with noble and generous principles, that I may always act as becomes me. A free spirit will be a firm and fixed spirit, and will uphold us. The more cheerful we are in our duty, the more constant we shall be to it.

(2.) See what David here promiseth, *ver.* 13. Observe, (1.) What good work he promiseth God to do; *I will teach transgressors thy ways*. David had been himself a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves having himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance, to teach others that had sinned, to take the same course that he had taken, to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God's face; and God's way towards us in pardoning mercy, how ready he is to receive those that return to him. He taught the former by his own example for the direction of sinners in repenting: He taught the latter by his own experience for their encouragement. By this psalm he is and will be to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. Note, Penitents should be preachers; Solomon was so, and blessed Paul. (2.) What good effect he promiseth himself from his doing this; *Sinners shall be converted unto thee*, and shall never perish in their wanderings from thee, nor despair of finding mercy in their returns to thee. The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors is their conversion to God, that is a happy point gained, and happy they that are instrumental to contribute towards it, *James* v. 20.

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. 15. O LORD, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. 16. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. 17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.



1. David prays against the guilt of sin, and prays for the grace of God, and enforceth both petitions with a plea taken from the glory of God, which he promiseth with thankfulness to shew forth:

(1.) He prays against the guilt of sin, that he might be delivered from that, and promiseth that then he would praise God, *ver. 14.* The particular sin he prays against is blood-guiltiness, the sin he had now been guilty of, having slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. Hitherto, perhaps, he had stopped the mouth of conscience with that frivolous excuse, that he did not kill him himself; but now he was convinced that he was the murderer, and hearing the blood cry to God for vengeance, he cries to God for mercy. *Deliver me from blood guiltiness, i. e.* Let me not lie under the guilt of that kind I have contracted, but let it be pardoned to me, and let me never be left to myself to contract the like guilt again. Note, It concerns us all to pray earnestly against the guilt of blood. In this prayer he eyes God as the God of Salvation. Note, Those to whom God is the God of Salvation he will deliver from guilt, for the salvation he is the God of is salvation from sin: We may therefore plead this with him, Lord, thou art the God of my salvation, therefore deliver me from the dominion of sin. He promiseth, that if God would deliver him, *his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness, i. e.* God should have the glory both of pardoning mercy, and preventing grace. God's righteousness is often put for his grace, especially in the great business of justification and sanctification. This he would comfort himself in, and therefore sing of it; and this he would endeavour both to acquaint and to assist others with; he would sing aloud of it. This all those should do that have had the benefit of it, and owe their all to it.

(2.) He prays for the grace of God, and promiseth to improve that grace to his glory, *ver. 15.* *O Lord, open thou my lips,* not only that I may teach and instruct sinners, which the best preacher cannot do to any purpose, unless God give him the opening of the mouth, and the tongue of the learned, but that my mouth may shew forth thy praise; not only that I may have abundant matter for praise, but an heart enlarged in praise. Guilt had closed his lips, had gone near to stop the mouth of prayer, he could not for shame, he could not for fear, come into the presence of that God whom he knew he had offended, much less speak to him; his heart condemned him, and therefore he had little confidence towards God: it cast a damp particularly upon his praises when he had lost the joys of his salvation, his harp was hung upon the willow trees, therefore he prays, *Lord, open my lips,* put my heart in tune for praise a min. To them that are tongue tied by reason of guilt, the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins faith effectually *Ephphata, Be opened:* and when the lips are opened, what should they speak but the praises of God? as Zacharias did, *Luke i. 64.*

2. David offers the sacrifice of a penitent, contrite heart, as that which he knew God would be pleased with.

(1.) He knew very well that the sacrificing of beasts was in itself of no account with God, *ver. 16.* *Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it,* with all my heart to obtain pardon and peace, but *thou delightest not in burnt offering.* Here see how fond David would have been to give thousands of rams to make atonement for sin. Those that are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger by reason of sin, would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it, *Micah vi. 6. 7.* But see how little God values this! As trials of obedience, and types of Christ, he did indeed require sacrifices to be offered: but he had no delight in them for any intrinsic worth or value they had: *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not:* As they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, any otherwise than as the offering of them is expressive of love and duty to him.

(1.) He knew also how acceptable true repentance is to God, *ver. 17.* *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* See here, (1.) What the good work is that is wrought in every true penitent. A broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. It is a work wrought upon the heart; that is it that God looks at, and requires in all religious exercises, particularly in the exercises of repentance. It is a sharp work wrought there, no less than the breaking of the heart; not in despair, as we say, when a man's undone his heart is broke; but in necessary humiliation, and sorrow for sin. It is a heart breaking with itself, and breaking from its sin, it is a heart pliable to the word of God, and patient under the rod of God; a heart subdued and brought into obedience; it is a heart that is tender, like Josiah's and trembles at God's word. O that there were such a heart in us! (2.) How graciously God is pleased to accept of this. It is the sacrifices of God, not one, but many, it is instead of all burnt offering and sacrifice. The breaking of Christ's body for sin is the only sacrifice of atonement, for no sacrifice but that could take away sin: but the breaking of our hearts for sin is a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a sacrifice of God, for to him it is offered up; he requires it, he prepares it, (he provides this lamb for a burnt offering) and he will accept of it. That which pleased God was not the feeding of a beast, and making much of it, but killing it, so it is not the pampering of our flesh, but the mortifying of it, that God will accept. The sacrifice was bound, was bled, was burnt; so the penitent heart is bound by convictions, bleeds in contrition, and then burns in holy zeal against sin and for God. The sacrifice was offered upon the altar that sanctified the gift: so the broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him; and this is the sacrifice which he will not despise. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despiseth the sacrifice of torn and broken beasts, but he will not despise that of a torn and broken heart. He will not overlook it, he will not refuse nor reject it: though he make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he doth not despise it. The proud pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican, and he thought very meanly of himself; but God did not despise him. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth to look with favour upon a *broken and a contrite heart,* *Isa. lvi. 1, 2—lvii. 15.*

2. David intercedes for Sion and Jerusalem, with an eye to the honour of God. See what a concern he had,

1. For the good of the church of God, *ver. 16.* *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, i. e.* (1.) To all the particular worshippers in Sion, to all that love and fear thy name; keep them from falling into such wounding walking sins as these of mine; defend and succour all that fear thy name. Those that have been in spiritual troubles themselves, know how to pity and pray for those that are in like manner afflicted. Or, (2.) To the public interests of Israel. David was sensible of the wrong he had done to Judah and Jerusalem by his sin; how it had weakened the hands and saddened the hearts of good people, and opened the mouth of their adversaries; he was likewise afraid lest, he being a public person, his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom, and therefore he prays to God to secure and advance those public interests which he had damaged and endangered. He prays, that God would prevent those national judgments, which his sin had deserved, that he would continue those blessings, and carry on that good work which it had threatened to retard and put a stop to. He prays not only that God would do good to Sion, as he did to other places by his providence, but that he would do it in his good pleasure, with the peculiar favour he bore to that place which he had chosen to put his name there:

that the walls of Jerusalem, which perhaps were now in the building, might be built up, and that good work finished. Note, (1.) When we have most business of our own, and of greatest importance at the throne of grace, yet then we must not forget to pray for the church of God; nay, our Master has taught us in our daily prayers to begin with that, *Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.* (2.) The consideration of the prejudice we have done to the public interests by our sins, should engage us to do them all the service we can, particularly by our prayers.

2. For the honour of the churches of God, *ver. 19.* If God would shew himself reconciled to him and his people, as he had prayed, then they should go on with the public services of his house; (1.) Cheerfully to themselves. The sense of God's goodness to them would enlarge their hearts in all the instances and expressions of thankfulness and obedience. They will then come to his tabernacle with burnt-offerings, with whole burnt-offerings, which were intended purely for the glory of God, and they shall offer not lambs and rams only, but bullocks, the costliest sacrifices upon his altar.

(2.) Acceptably to God: *Thou shalt be pleased with them, i. e.* we shall have reason to hope so, when we perceive the sin taken away, which threatened to hinder thine acceptance. Note, It is a great comfort to a good man to think of the communion that is between God and his people in their public assemblies; how he is honoured by their humble attendance on him, and they are happy in his gracious acceptance of them.

## P S A L M LII.

David, no doubt, was in very great grief when he said to Abiathar, *1 Sam. xxii. 22.* I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house, which were put to death upon Doeg's malicious information; to give some vent to that grief, and to gain some relief to his mind under it, he penned this psalm, wherein as a prophet, and therefore with as good an authority as if he had been now a prince upon the throne, (1.) He arraigns Doeg for what he had done, *ver. 1.* (2.) He accuseth him, convicts him, and aggravates his crime, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* (3.) He passeth sentence upon him, *ver. 5.* (4.) He foretells the triumph of the righteous in the execution of the sentence, *ver. 6, 7.* (5.) He comforts himself in the mercy of God, and the assurance he had that he should yet praise him, *ver. 8, 9.* In singing this psalm we should conceive a detestation of the sin of lying, foresee the ruin of those that persist in it, and please ourselves with the assurance of the preservation of God's church and people, in spite of all the malicious designs of the children of Satan, that father of lies.

To the chief musician, Maschil, A psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Abimelech.

1. **W**HY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually. 2. Thy tongue deviseth mischief; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. 3. Thou lovest evil more than good: and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. 4. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. 5. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

The title is a brief account of the story which the psalm refers to. David now at length saw it necessary to quit the court, and shift for his own safety for fear of Saul, who had once and again attempted to murder him. Being unprovided of arms and victuals, he by a wife got Abimelech the priest to furnish him with both; Doeg an Edomite happened to be there, and went and informed Saul against Abimelech, representing him as confederate with a traitor; upon which accusation Saul rounded a very bloody warrant, to kill all the priests, and Doeg, who was the prosecutor, was the executioner, *1 Sam. xxii. 9, &c.*

In these verses,

1. David argues the case fairly with this proud and mighty man, *ver. 1.* Doeg, it is probable, was mighty in respect of his strength; but if he were, he gained no reputation to it by his easy victory over the unarmed priests of the Lord; it is no honour for those who wear a sword to hector those that wear an ephod. However he was by his office a mighty man, for he was set over the servants of Saul, chamberlain of the household. This was he that boasted himself not only in the power he had to do mischief, but in the mischief he did. Note, It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to brag of it, and glory in it when we have done so; not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to justify it, not only to justify it, but to magnify it, and value ourselves upon it. They that glory in their sin, glory in their shame; and then it becomes yet more shameful; mighty men are often mischievous men; and *boast of their hearts desire,* *Psal. x. 3.* It is uncertain how the following words come in; *The goodness of God endures continually.* Some make it the wicked man's answer to this question; the patience and forbearance of God, that great instance of his goodness is abused by sinners, to the hardening of their hearts in their wicked ways; because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily; nay, God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast in mischief; as if their prosperity in their wickedness were an evidence that there is no harm in it; but it is rather to be taken as an argument against him, to shew, (1.) The sinfulness of his sin; God is continually doing good, and those that therein are like him, have reason to glory in their being so; but thou art continually doing mischief, and therein are utterly unlike him, and contrary to him, and yet gloriest in being so. (2.) The folly of it; thou thinkest with the mischief which thou boastest of, the artful contriving of, and successful carrying on of, to run down and ruin the people of God; but thou wilt find thyself mistaken, *the goodness of God endures continually* for their preservation, and then they need not fear what man can do unto them. The enemies in vain boast in their mischief, while we have God's mercy to boast in.

2. He draws up a high charge against him in the court of heaven, as he had drawn up a high charge against Abimelech in Saul's court, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* He accuseth him of the wickedness of his tongue, that unruly evil full of deadly poison; and the wickedness of his heart, which that was an evidence of. Four things he charges him with. (1.) Malice; his tongue doth mischief, not only pricking like a needle, but cutting like a sharp razor. Scornful bantering words would not content him, he loved devouring words, words that would ruin the priests of the Lord, whom he hated. (2.) Falshood; it was a deceitful tongue that he did this mischief with, *ver. 4.* he loved lying, *ver. 3.* and this sharp razor did work deceitfully, *ver. 2.*



*i. e.* before he had this occasion given him to discover his malice against the priests, he had carried it very plausibly towards them; though he were an Edomite, he attended the altars, and brought his offerings, and paid his respects to the priests as decently as any Israelite: though therein he put a force upon himself, for he was detained before the Lord; but herein he gained an opportunity of doing them so much the greater mischief. Or it may refer to the information itself, which he gave in against Abimelech; for the matter of fact was in substance true, yet it was misrepresented, and false colours put upon it; and therefore he might well be said to love lying, and to have a deceitful tongue; He told the truth, but not all the truth, as a witness ought to do; had he told that David made Abimelech believe he was then going upon Saul's errand, the kindness he shewed him would have appeared to be not only not traitorous against Saul but respectful to him. It will not free us from the guilt of lying, to be able to say, there were some truth in what we said, if we pervert it, and make it to appear otherwise than it was. (3.) Subtily in sin; *thy tongue deviseth mischief*; *i. e.* it speaks the mischief which thy heart deviseth. The more there is of craft and contrivance in any wickedness, the more there is of the devil in it. (4.) Affliction to sin; *thou lovest evil more than good*, *i. e.* thou lovest evil, and hast no love at all to that which is good; thou takest delight in lying, and makest no conscience of doing right. Thou wouldst rather please Saul, by telling a lie, than please God by speaking the truth. Those are of Doeg's spirit, who, instead of being pleased, (as we ought all to be) with an opportunity of doing a man a kindness in his body, estate, or good name, are glad when they have a fair occasion to do a man a mischief, and readily close with an opportunity of that kind: this is loving evil more than good. It is bad to speak devouring words, but it is worse to love them, either in others or in ourselves.

3. He reads his doom, and denounceth the judgments of God against him for his wickedness, *ver. 5.* Thou hast destroyed the priests of the Lord, and cut them off, and therefore *God shall likewise destroy thee for ever*; sons of perdition actively, shall be sons of perdition passively, as Judas and the man of sin. Destroyers shall be destroyed; those especially that hate and persecute, and destroy the priests of the Lord, his ministers and people, who are made to our God priests, a royal priesthood, shall be taken away with a swift and everlasting destruction. Doeg is here condemned, (1.) To be driven out of the church; *he shall pluck thee out of the tabernacle*, not thy dwelling place but God's, so it is most probably understood. Thou shalt be cut off from the favour of God, and his presence, and all communion with him, and shalt have no benefit either by oracle or offering. Justly was he deprived of all the privileges of God's house, that had been so mischievous to his servants; he had come sometimes to God's tabernacle, and attended in his courts, but he was detained there, he was sick of his service, and sought an opportunity to defame his family; it was very fit therefore he should be taken away, and plucked out from thence; we would forbid one of our house that should serve us so. Note, We forfeit the benefit of ordinances, if we make an ill use of them. (2.) To be driven out of the world; *He shall root thee out of the land of the living*, in which thou thoughtest thyself so deeply rooted. When good men die, they are transplanted from the land of the living on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall take root for ever; but when wicked men die they are rooted out of the land of the living, to perish for ever; as fuel to the fire of divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God.

6. The righteous also shall see and fear, and shall laugh at him. 7. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness. 8. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. 9. I will praise thee for ever; because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name, for it is good before thy saints.

David was at this time in great distress, the mischief Doeg had done him was but the beginning of his sorrows; and yet here we have him triumphing, and that is more than rejoicing, in tribulation. Blessed Paul, in the midst of his troubles, is in the midst of his triumphs, *2 Cor. ii. 14.* David here triumphs,

1. In the fall of Doeg; yet lest this should look like personal revenge, he doth not speak of it as his own act, but the language of other righteous persons. They shall observe God's judgments on Doeg, and speak of them. (1.) To the glory of God; they shall see and fear, *ver. 6.* *i. e.* they shall reverence the justice of God, and stand in awe of him, as a God of almighty power, before whom the proudest sinner cannot stand, and before whom therefore we ought every one of us to humble ourselves. Note, God's judgments on the wicked should strike an awe upon the righteous, and make them afraid of offending God and incurring his displeasure, *Psalm cxix. 120.* *Rev. xv. 3, 4.*

(1.) To the shame of Doeg. They shall laugh at him, not with a ludicrous, but a rational serious laughter, as *he that sits in heaven shall laugh at him*, *Psalm ii. 4.* He shall appear ridiculous and worthy to be laughed at. We are told how they shall triumph in God's just judgments on him, *ver. 7.* *Lo this is the man that made not God his strength*; the fall and ruin of a wealthy mighty man, cannot but be generally taken notice of, and every one is apt to make his remarks upon it; now this is the remark which the righteous should make upon Doeg's fall, that no better could come of it, since he took the wrong method of establishing himself in his wealth and power. If a new erected fabric tumbles down, presently every one enquires where was the fault in the building of it. Now that which ruined Doeg's prosperity was, (1.) That he did not build it upon a rock; *he made not God his strength*, *i. e.* he did not think that the continuance of his prosperity depended upon the favour of God, and therefore took no care to make sure that favour, nor to keep himself in God's love; made no conscience of his duty to him, nor sought him in the least. Those wretchedly deceive themselves, that think to support themselves in their power and wealth without God and religion. (2.) That he did build it upon the sand. He thought his wealth would support itself, *he trusted in the abundance of his riches*, which he imagined were laid up for many years; nay, he thought his wickedness would help to support it: he was resolved to stick at nothing for the securing and advancing of his honour and power; right or wrong he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way, and this he thought would strengthen him; they may have any thing that will make conscience of nothing. But now see what it comes to; see what untemper'd mortar he built his house with, now it is fallen, and himself buried in the ruins of it.

2. In his own stability, *ver. 8, 9.* This mighty man is plucked up by the root, *But I am like a green olive tree*, planted and rooted, fixed and

flourishing: he is turned out of God's dwelling-place, but I am established in it, not detained as Doeg, by any thing but the abundant satisfaction I meet with there. Note, Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God, shall be like green olive trees there; the wicked are said to flourish like a green bay tree, *Psalm xxxvii. 35* which bears no useful fruit, though it have abundance of large leaves; but the righteous flourish like a green olive tree, which is fat as well as flourishing, *Psalm lxxviii. 14.* and with its fatness honours God and man, *Judg. ix. 9.* deriving its root and fatness from the good olive, *Rom. xi. 17.*

Now what must we do that we may be as green olive trees?

1. We must live a life of faith and holy confidence in God, and his grace. I see what comes of men's trusting in the abundance of their riches, and therefore *I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever*, not in the world, but in God; not in my own merit but in God's mercy; which dispenseth its gifts freely, even to the unworthy, and has in it an all-sufficiency to be our portion and happiness. This mercy is for ever, it is constant and unchangeable and its gifts will continue to all eternity: we must therefore for ever trust in it, and never come off from that bottom.

2. We must live a life of thankfulness and holy joy in God, *ver. 9.* *I will praise thee for ever because thou hast done it*, hast avenged the blood of thy priests upon their bloody enemy, and given him blood to drink; and hast performed thy promise to me, which he was as sure would be done in due time, as if it was done already. It contributes very much to the hearty of our profession, and to our fruitfulness, in every grace to be much in praising God, and it is certain we never want matter for praise.

3. We must live a life of expectation, and humble dependence upon God; *I will wait on thy name*, *i. e.* I will attend upon thee in all those ways wherein thou hast made thyself known, hoping for the discoveries of thy favour to me, and willing to tarry till the time appointed for then: for it is good before thy saints; or in the opinion and judgment of thy saints, with whom David heartily concurs. All the saints are of this mind; it is the *communis sensus fidelium*. (1.) That God's name is good in itself. That God's manifestations of himself to his people are gracious and very kind; there is no other name given but his, that would be our refuge and strong tower. (2.) That it is very good for us to wait on that name; that there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits when they are restless and disturbed; and to keep us in the way of duty, when we are tempted to use any indirect courses for our own relief, than to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord, *Lam. iii. 26.* All the saints have experienced the benefit of it, who never attended him in vain, never followed his conduct, but it ended well; nor were ever made ashamed of their believing expectations from him. What is good before all the saints, let us therefore abide and abound in, and in this particularly; *Turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually*, *Hos. xii. 6.*

# P S A L M LIII.

God speaketh once, yea, twice, and it were well if man would even then perceive it; God, in this psalm, speaketh twice, for this is the same almost verbatim with the fourteenth psalm. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins, to set us a blushing, and to set us a trembling because of them; and this is what we are so hardly brought to, that there is need of line upon line to this purpose. The word, as a convincing word, is compared to a hammer, the strokes whereof must be frequently repeated. God, by the psalmist here, (1.) Shows us how bad we are, *ver. 1.* (2.) Proves it upon us by his own certain knowledge, *ver. 2, 3.* (3.) He speaks terror to persecutors, the worst of sinners, *ver. 4, 5.* (4.) He speaks encouragement to God's persecuted people, *ver. 6.* Some little variation there is between *Psalm xiv.* and this, but none considerable, only between *ver. 5, 6.* there, and *ver. 5.* where some expressions there used, are here left out, concerning the shame which the wicked put upon God's people, and instead of that is here foretold the shame which God would put upon the wicked; which alteration, with some others, he made by divine direction, when he delivered it the second time to the chief musician. In singing it, we ought to lament the corruption of the human nature, and the wretched degeneracy of the world we live in, yet rejoicing in hope of the great salvation.

1 To the chief musician upon Mahalath, MASCHIL.

## A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*; corrupt are they and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good. 2. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. 3. Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one. 4. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people, as they eat bread; they have not called upon God. 5. There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee, thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them. 6. O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe, in short, some things concerning sin, in order to the increasing of our sorrow for it and hatred of it.

1. The fact of sin; is that proved? can the charge be made out? Yes, God is a witness to it; an unexceptionable witness: From the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and sees how little good there is among them, *ver. 2.* All the sinfulness of their hearts and lives is naked and open before them.

2. The fault of sin; is there any harm in it; Yes, it is iniquity, *ver. 1-4.* it is an unrighteous thing; it is that which there is no good in, *ver. 1-3.* it is an evil thing, it is the worst of evils, it is that which makes this world such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, *ver. 3.*

3. The fountain of sin; how comes it that men are so bad? Surely, it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes; they say in their hearts *there is no God* at all to call us to an account, none that we need to stand in awe of. Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him.



4. The folly of sin; he is a fool (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) that harbours such corrupt thoughts; atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world: They that do not seek God, they do not understand, they are like brute beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes not so much by the powers of reason, as by a capacity for religion. The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, they have no knowledge; those may be truly said to know nothing, that do not know God, *ver. 4.*

5. The filthiness of sin; sinners are corrupt, *ver. 1.* their nature is vitiated and spoiled, and the more noble the nature is, the more vile it is when it is depraved, as that of the angels, *Corruptio optimi est pessima.* Their iniquity is abominable, it is odious to the holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he *hates nothing that he has made.* It makes men filthy, altogether filthy; wilful sinners (pardon the expression) even sink above ground in the nostrils of the God of heaven and the holy angels. What neatness soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain wickedness is the greatest nastiness in the world.

6. The fruit of sin: see to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last; when men's hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, see their cruelty to their brethren, that are bone of their bone, because they will not run with them to the same excess of riot, they eat them up as they eat bread; as if they were not only become beasts but beasts of prey. And see their contempt of God at the same time, they have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.

7. The fear and shame that attends sin, *ver. 5.* There were they in great fear, who had made God their enemy, their own guilty consciences frightened them, and filled them with horror, though otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear; the wicked flee when none pursues. See the ground of this fear; it is because God hath formerly scattered the bones of those that encamped against his people, not only broken their power, and dispersed their forces, but slain them, and reduced their bodies to dry bones, like those scattered at the grave's mouth, *Psalm cxli. 7.* Such will be the fate of those that lay siege to the camp of the saints and the beloved city, *Rev. xx. 9.* And the apprehensions of this cannot but put those into frights that eat up God's people. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Sion, to put them to shame, and expose them; because God hath despised them; to laugh at them, because he that sits in heaven laughs at them. We need not look upon these enemies with fear, whom God looks upon with contempt. If he despiseth them, we may.

Lastly, The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil, *ver. 6.* There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption. (1.) God would in due time save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which would bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that had long been in a mournful melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. (2.) He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins, *Matt. i. 21.*

# P S A L M LIV.

The key of this psalm hangs at the door, for the title tells us upon what occasion it was penned, when the inhabitants of Ziph, men of Judah, (types of Judas the traitor) betrayed David to Saul, by informing him where he was, and putting him in a way how to seize him. This they did twice, *1 Sam. xxiii. 19.—xxvi. 1.* and is upon record to their everlasting infamy. This psalm is exact, the former part of it, perhaps, was meditated when he was in distress, and when the danger was over was put into writing, and the two last verses added, which speak his thankfulness for the deliverance; which yet might be written in faith, even then when he was in the midst of his fright. Here, (1.) He complains to God of the malice of his enemies, and prays for help against them, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) He comforts himself with an assurance of the divine favour and protection, and that in due time his enemies should be confounded, and he delivered, *ver. 4—7.* What time we are in distress, we must comfortably sing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician on Neginoth, Masehil. A Psalm of David when the Ziphims came and laid to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

1. **S**AVE me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength. 2. Hear my prayer, O God: give ear to the words of my mouth. 3. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul; they have not set God before them. Selah.

We may observe here,

1. The great distress that David was now in, which the title gives an account of. The Ziphims came of their own accord, and informed Saul where David was, with a promise to deliver him into his hand. One would have thought, when David was retired into the country, he should not have been pursued: into a desert country, he should not have been discovered; and into his own country, he should not have been betrayed; and yet it seems he was. Never let a good man expect to be safe and easy till he comes to heaven. How treacherous, how officious, were these Ziphims! It is well God is faithful, for men are not to be trusted, *Micah vii. 5.*

2. His prayer to God for succour and deliverance, *ver. 12.* He appeals to God's strength, by which he was able to help him, and to his name, by which he was engaged to help him, and begs he would save him from his enemies, and judge him, i. e. plead his cause and judge for him. David had no other plea to depend upon but God's name, no other power to depend upon but God's strength, and those he makes his refuge and confidence. This would be the effectual answer of his prayers, *ver. 2.* which even in his flight, when he had not an opportunity for solemn address to God, he was ever and anon lifting up to heaven, *Hear my prayer* which comes from my heart, and *give ear to the words of my mouth.*

3. His plea, which is taken from the character of his enemies, *ver. 3.* (1.) They are strangers, such were the Ziphites, unworthy the name of Israelites; they have used me more basely and barbarously than the Philistines themselves would have done. The worst treatment may be expected from those who having broken through the bonds of relation and alliance, make themselves strangers. (2.) They are oppressors, such was Saul, who as a king, should have used his power for the protection of his good subjects, but abused it for their destruction. Nothing so grievous as oppression in

the seat of judgment, *Eccles. iii. 16.* Paul's greatest perils were by his own countrymen, and by false brethren, *2 Cor. xi. 26.* and so were David's, (3.) They were very formidable and threatening: they not only hated him and wished him ill, but they rose up against him in a body, joining their power to do him a mischief. (4.) They were very spiteful and malicious; they seek after my soul; they hunt for the precious life, no less will satisfy them. We may in faith pray that God would not by his providence give success, lest it should look like giving countenance to such cruel bloody men. (5.) They were very profane and atheistical, and for this reason he thought God was concerned in honour to appear against them, *They have not set God before them,* i. e. they have quite cast off the thoughts of God, they do not consider that his eye is upon them, that in fighting against his people they fight against him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement. Note, From those who do not set God before them no good can be expected; nay, what wickedness will not such men be guilty of? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold those that have broke through the fear of God? Selah. Mark this: Let us all be sure to set God before us at all times: for if we do not, we are in danger of going all to nought.

4. Behold, God is mine helper: the LORD is with them that uphold my soul. 5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth. 6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD, for it is good. 7. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble; and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

We have here the lively actings of David's faith in his prayer, by which he was assured the issue would be comfortable, though the attempt upon him was formidable.

1. He was sure that he had God on his side: that God took his part, *ver. 4.* He speaks it with an air of triumph and exultation, *Behold, God is mine helper.* If we be for him, he is for us: and if he be for us, we shall have such help in him, as that we need not fear any power engaged against us. Though men and devils aim to be our destroyers, they shall not prevail while God is our helper. *The Lord is with them that uphold my soul; Compare Psalm cxviii. 7. The Lord taketh my part with them that help me.* There is some that uphold me, and God is one of them; he is the principal one: none of them could help me if he did not help them. Every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be. He means, The Lord is he that doth uphold my soul, and keep me from sinking in my work and sinking under my burdens. He that by his providence upholds all things by his grace upholds the souls of his people. God that will in due time save his people, doth in the mean time sustain them, and bear them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

2. God taking part with him, he doubteth not but his enemies should both flee and fall before him, *ver. 5.* He shall reward evil unto mine enemies that observe me, seeking an opportunity to do me a mischief. The evil they designed against me, the righteous God will return upon their own heads. David would not render evil to them, but he knew God would; *I as a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear.* The enemies we forgive, if they repent not, God will judge: and for this reason we must not avenge ourselves, because God hath said, *Vengeance is mine.* But he prays, *Cut them off in thy truth.* This is not a prayer of malice, but a prayer of truth, for it has an eye to the word of God, and only desires the performance of that. There is truth in God's threatenings, as well as in his promises, and sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost.

3. He promiseth to give thanks to God for all the experiences he had had of his goodness to him, *ver. 6.* I will sacrifice unto thee. Though sacrifices were expensive, yet when God required that his worshippers should in that way praise him, David would not only offer them, but offer them freely, and without grudging. All our spiritual sacrifices must in this sense be free-will offerings, for God loves a cheerful giver. Yet he will not only bring his sacrifice, which was but the shadow, the ceremony, he will mind the substance, *I will praise thy name.* A thankful heart, and the calves of our lips giving thanks to his name, are the sacrifices God will accept, *I will praise thy name, for it is good.* Thy name is not only great but good; and therefore to be praised; to praise thy name is not only what we are bound to, but it is good, it is pleasant, it is profitable; it is good for us, *Psalm xcii. 1.* therefore *I will praise thy name.*

4. He speaks of his deliverance as a thing done, *ver. 7.* I will praise thy name, and say, *He hath delivered me.* This shall be my song then, That which he rejoiceth in is a complete deliverance, *He hath delivered me from all trouble:* and a deliverance to his heart's content; *Mine eye hath seen its desire upon mine enemies:* Not seen them cut off and ruined, but forced to retreat; tidings being brought to Saul that the Philistines were upon him, *1 Sam. xxiii. 27, 28.* That was all David desired, to be himself safe: when he saw Saul draw off his forces he saw his desire. *He hath delivered me from all trouble:* Either, (1.) With this thought David comforted himself when he was in distress, *He hath delivered me from all trouble* hitherto, and many a time I have gained my point, and seen my desire on mine enemies, therefore he will deliver me out of this trouble. We should thus in our greatest straits encourage ourselves with our past experiences. Or, (2.) With this thought he magnified his present deliverance when the fright is over, that it was an earnest of further deliverance. He speaks of the completing of his deliverance as a thing done, though he had as yet many troubles before him; because having God's promise for it, he was as sure of it as if it was done already. He that hath begun to deliver me from this trouble, shall deliver me from all troubles, and shall at length give me to see my desire upon mine enemies. This may, perhaps, point at Christ, of whom David was a type. God would deliver him out of all the troubles of his state of humiliation, and he was perfectly sure of it; and all things are said to be put under his feet; for though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we are sure he shall reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and he shall see his desire upon them. However, it is an encouragement to all believers to make that use of their particular deliverances which St. Paul doth (like David here) *2 Tim. iv. 17, 18.* *He that delivered me from the mouth of the lion shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.*

# P S A L M LV.

It is the conjecture of many expositors, that David penned this psalm upon occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and that the particular enemy he here speaks of that dealt treacherously with him, was Ahithophel, and some will therefore make David's troubles here typical of Christ's sufferings, and Ahithophel's treachery a figure of Judas's; because they both hanged themselves: But there is nothing in it that is particularly



cularly applied to Christ in the New Testament. David was in a great distress when he penned this psalm. (1.) He prays that God would manifest his favour to him, and pleads his own sorrow and fear, ver. 1-8. (2.) He prays that God would manifest his displeasure against his enemies, and pleads their great wickedness and treachery, ver. 9-15. and again, ver. 20. 21. (3.) He assures himself that God would in due time appear for him against his enemies, comforts himself with the hopes of it, and encourageth others to trust in God, ver. 16-19. and again, ver. 22. 23. In singing this psalm we may, if there be occasion, apply it to our own troubles; if not, we may sympathize with those to whose cases it comes nearer, foreseeing that there will be at last indignation and wrath to the persecutors, salvation and joy to the persecuted.

¶ To the chief musician on Neginoth, MASCHIL.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **G**IVE ear to my prayer, O God: and hide not thyself from my supplication. 2. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise. 3. Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me. 4. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. 5. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. 6. And I said, O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. 7. Lo then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. 8. I will hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

In these verses we have,

1. David praying. Prayer is a salve for every sore, and a relief to the spirit under every burden. Give ear to my prayer, O God, ver. 12. He doth not set down the petitions he offered up to God in his distress, but begs that God would hear the prayers which at every turn his heart lifted up to God, and grant answer of peace to them; Attend to me and hear me. Saul would not hear his petitions, his other enemies regarded not his pleas, but Lord, be thou pleased to hearken to me. Hide not thyself from my supplication; either as one unconcerned, and not regarding it, nor seeming to take any notice of it; or as one displeased, angry at me, and therefore at my prayer. If we in our prayers sincerely lay open ourselves, our case, our hearts to God, we have reason to hope that he will not hide himself, his favours, his comforts from us.

2. David weeping; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was a man of sorrows and often in tears, ver. 2. I mourn in my complaint, or in my meditation, my melancholy musings. and I make a noise, I cannot forbear such sighs and groans, and other expressions of grief, as discover it to those about me. Great griefs are sometimes noisy and clamorous, and by that means are in some measure lessened, while those increase that are stifled, and have no vent given them. But what was the matter? ver. 2. It is because of the voice of the enemy, the menaces and insults of Absalom's party that he roared and talked big, and stirred up the people to cry out against David, and shout him out of his palace and capital city; as afterwards the chief priests stirred up the mob to cry out against the son of David, Away with him, crucify him. Yet it was not the voice of the enemy only that fetched tears from David's eyes, but their oppression, and the hardship he was thereby reduced to. They cast iniquity upon me. They could not justly charge David with any mal-administration in his government, could not prove any act of oppression or injustice upon him, but they loaded him with calumnies. Though the sound no iniquity in him relating to his trust as a king, yet they cast all manner of iniquity upon him, and represented him to the people as a tyrant fit to be expelled. Innocency itself is no security against violent and lying tongues. They hated him themselves, nay, in wrath they hated him; there was in their enmity both the heat and violence of anger, or sudden passion, and the implacableness of hatred and rooted malice; and therefore they studied to make him odious, that others also might hate him. This made him moan, and the more, because he could remember the time when he was the darling of the people, and answered his name, David a beloved one.

3. David trembling and in great consternation. We may well suppose him to be so, upon the breaking out of Absalom's conspiracy, and the general defection of the people, even those that he had little reason to suspect.

1. See what fears seized him. David was a man of great boldness, and in some very eminent instances had signalized his courage, and yet when the danger was surprising and imminent, his heart failed him; let not the stout man therefore glory in his courage, any more than the strong man in his strength. Now David's heart is sore pained within him, the terrors of death are fallen upon him, ver. 4. Now fearfulness of mind and trembling of body are come upon him, and horror has covered and overwhelmed him, ver. 5. when without are fightings, no marvel that within are fears; and if it was upon the occasion of Absalom's rebellion, we may suppose that the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah, which God was now reckoning with him for, added as much more to the fright. Sometimes David's faith made him in a manner fearless, and he could boldly say when surrounded with enemies, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. But at other times his fears prevail and tyrannize; for the best men are not always alike strong in faith.

2. See how desirous he was in this fright to retire into a desert, any whither to be far enough from hearing the voice of the enemy, and seeing their oppressions. He said, ver. 6. said it to God in prayer, said it to himself in meditation, said it to his friends in complaint, O that I had wings like a dove! As much as he had been sometimes in love with Jerusalem, now it was become a rebellious city, he longed to get clear of it, and like the prophet witheth he had in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men that he might leave his people and go from them, for they are an assembly of treacherous men, Jer. ix. 2. This agrees very well with David's resolution upon the breaking out of that plot, Arise, let us flee and make speed to depart, 2 Sam. xv. 14. Observe,

(1.) How he would make his escape, he was so surrounded with enemies, that he saw not how he could escape but upon the wing, and therefore witheth, O that I had wings, not like a hawk, that flies strongly, but like a dove; that flies swiftly; he witheth not for wings to fly upon the prey, but to fly from the birds of prey, for such his enemies were. The wings of a dove were most agreeable to him who was of a dove-like spirit, and therefore the

wings of an eagle would not become him. The dove flies low, and takes shelter as soon as she can, and thus would David fly.

(2.) What he would make his escape from, from the wind, storm, and tempest, the tumult and ferment that the city was now in, and the danger to which he was exposed. Herein he was like a dove, that cannot endure noise.

(3.) What he aimed at in making his escape, not victory, but rest. I would fly away, and be at rest, ver. 6. I would fly any whither, if it were to a barren frightful wilderness, never so far off, so I might be quiet, ver. 7. Note, Peace and quietness in silence and solitude is what the wisest and best of men have most earnestly coveted, and the more when they have been vexed and wearied with the noisiness and clamour of those about them. Gracious souls wish to retire from the hurry and bustle of this world, where they may sweetly enjoy God and themselves, and if there be any true peace on this side heaven, it is they that enjoy it in those retirements. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world to perfect and everlasting rest.

9. Destroy, O LORD, and divide their tongues; for I have seen violence and strife in the city. 10. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof, mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. 11. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. 12. For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him. 13. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guile, and mine acquaintance. 14. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. 15. Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

David here complains of his enemies, whose wicked plots had brought him, though not to his faith's end, yet to his wit's end, and prays against them by the spirit of prophecy. Observe here,

1. The character he gives of the enemies he feared. They were of the worst sort of men, and his description of them agrees very well with Absalom and his accomplices.

(1.) He complains of the city Jerusalem, which strangely fell in with Absalom, and fell off from David, so that he had none there but his own guards and servants that he could repose any confidence in; How is that faithful city become a harlot! David did not take the representation of it from others; but with his own eyes, and with a sad heart did himself see nothing but violence and strife in the city, ver. 9. for when they grew disaffected and disloyal to David they grew mischievous one to another. If he walked the rounds upon the walls of the city, he saw that violence and strife went about it day and night, and mounted its guards, ver. 10. All the arts and methods which the rebels used for the fortifying of the city were made up of violence and strife, and there were no remains of honesty or love among them. If he looked into the heart of the city, mischief and injury, mutual wrong and vexation were in the midst of it; wickedness, all manner of wickedness is in the midst thereof; Jusque datum sceleri: Deceit and guile, and all manner of treacherous dealing, departed not from her streets, ver. 11. It may be meant of the base and barbarous usage they gave to David's friends, and such as they knew were firm and faithful to him; they did them all the mischief they could by fraud or force. Is this the character of Jerusalem, the royal city, and which is more, the holy city, and in David's time too, so soon after the thrones of judgment and the testimony of Israel were both placed there? Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, Lam. ii. 15. Is Jerusalem the head quarters of God's priests, so ill taught? Can Jerusalem be ungrateful to David himself, its own illustrious founder, and be made too hot for him? Let us not think strange at the corruptions and disorders of his church on earth, but long to see the New Jerusalem where there is no violence or strife, no mischief or guile, and into which no unclean thing shall enter, nor any thing that disquiets.

(2.) He complains of one of the ring-leaders of the conspiracy, that had been very industrious to foment jealousies, to misrepresent him and his government, and to incense the city against him; it was one that reproached him, as if he either abused his power, or neglected the use of it, for that was Absalom's malicious suggestions; There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee, 2 Sam. xv. 3. That and other the like accusations were industriously spread among the people; and who was most active in it? not a sworn enemy, not Shimei, or any of the nonjurors; then I could have borne it, for I should not have expected better from them, (and we find how patiently he did bear Shimei's curses) not one that professed to hate me, then I would have stood upon my guard against him, would have hid myself and my counsels from him, so that it would not have been in his power to betray me; but it was thou, a man, mine equal, ver. 13. The Chaldee paraphrase names Ahithopel, as the person here meant, and nothing in that plot seems to have discouraged David so much as to hear Ahithopel was among the conspirators with Absalom, 2 Sam. xv. 31. for he was the king's counsellor, 1 Chron. xxvii. 33. It was thou, a man, mine equal, one whom I esteemed as myself, a friend as mine own soul, whom I laid in my bosom, and made hale fellow with myself; to whom I had communicated all my secrets, and who knew my mind as well as I myself did; my guide with whom I advised, and by whom I was directed in all my affairs, whom I made president of the council and prime minister of state; my intimate acquaintance and familiar friend; this is the man that now abuseth me. I have been kind to him; but I find him thus basely ungrateful; I have put a trust in him, but I find him thus basely treacherous; nay, and he could not have done me the one half the mischief he doth, if I had not shewed him so much respect. All this must need be very grievous to an ingenuous mind, and yet this was not all; this traitor had seemed a saint, else he had never been David's bosom friend, ver. 14. We took counsel together, spent many an hour together with a great deal of pleasure in religious discourse, or as Dr. Hammond reads it, we joined ourselves together to the assembly; I gave him the right hand of fellowship in holy ordinances, and then we walked to the house of God in company, to attend the public service. Note, 1. There always has been and always will be, a mixture of good and bad, sound and unsound, in the visible church, between whom perhaps for a long time we can discern no difference, but the searcher of hearts doth. David who went to the house of God in his sincerity, had Ahithopel in company with him, who went in his hypocrisy. The Pharisee and the Publican went together to the temple to pray, but sooner or later they that



that are perfect, and they that are not, will be made manifest. (2.) Carnal policy may carry men on very far, and very long in possession of religion, while it is in fashion, and will serve a turn. In the court of pious David, none more devout than Abiathophel, and yet his heart not right in the sight of God. (3.) We must not wonder, if we be fully deceived in some that have made great pretensions to those two sacred things, religion and friendship: David himself, though a very wise man, was thus imposed upon, which may make our like disappointments the more tolerable.

2 His prayers against them, which we are both to stand in awe of, and to comfort ourselves in as prophecies, but not to copy into our prayers against any particular enemies of our own. He prays.

1. That God would disperse them as he did the Babel-builders, *ver. 9. Destroy O Lord, and divide their tongues*, i. e. Blast their counsels by making them to disagree among themselves, and clasp with one another: Send an evil spirit among them, that they may not understand one another, but be envious and jealous one of another. This prayer was answered in the turning of Abiathophel's counsel into foolishness, by setting up the counsel of Hushai against it. God often destroys the church's enemies by dividing them; nor is there a surer way to the destruction of any people than their division. A kingdom, an interest divided against itself cannot long stand.

2. That God would destroy them as he did Dathan and Abiram, and their associates, who were confederate against Moses, whose throat being an open sepulchre, the earth therefore opened, and swallowed him up. This was then a new thing which God executed. *Numb. xvi. 30.* But David prays that it might now be repeated, or something equivalent, *ver. 15. Let death seize upon them*, by divine warrant, and let them go down quick into hell; and let them be dead and buried, and damned in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are, it is in the midst of them. The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell, for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall therefore live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah.

16. As for me, I will call upon God: and the LORD shall save me. 17. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. 18. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me. 19. God shall hear and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God. 20. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. 21. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords. 22. Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. 23. But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in thee.

In these verses,

1. David perseveres in his resolution to call upon God, being well assured that he should not seek him in vain, *ver. 16.* As for me, let them take what course they please to secure themselves, let violence and strife be their guards, prayer shall be mine: This I have found comfort in, and therefore this will I abide by. *I will call upon God*, and commit myself to him, and the Lord shall save me, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, in a right manner shall be saved, *Rom. x. 13.* He resolves to be both fervent and frequent in this duty. (1.) He will pray fervently, *I will pray and cry aloud.* I will meditate, so the former word signifies, I will speak with my own heart, and the prayer shall come from hence; then we pray aright when we pray with all that is within us; think first, and then pray over our thoughts; for the true nature of prayer is lifting up the heart to God: and having meditated, he will cry, he will cry aloud; the fervour of his spirit in prayer shall be expressed, and yet more excited by the intenseness and earnestness of his voice. (2.) He will pray frequently, every day, and three times a day, evening and morning, and at noon. It is probable this had been his constant practice, and he resolves to continue it, now he is in his distress: And then we may come the more boldly to the throne of grace in trouble, when we do not then first begin to scrape acquaintance with God, (as I may say) but it is what we have constantly practised, and the trouble finds the wheels of prayer a-going. They that think three meals a-day little enough for the body, ought much more to think three solemn prayers a day little enough for the soul, and to count it a pleasure, not a task: As it is fit in the morning we should begin the day with God, and in the evening close it with him, so it is fit in the midst of the day we should retire a-while to converse with him. It was Daniel's practice to pray three times a day, *Dan. vi. 10.* And noon was one of Peter's hours of prayer, *Acts x. 9.* Let us not be weary of praying often, for God is not weary of hearing; he shall hear my voice and not blame me for coming too often, but the oftener the better, the more welcome.

2. He assures himself, that God would in due time give an answer of peace to his prayers.

(1.) That he himself should be delivered, and his fears prevented; those fears with which he was much disordered, *ver. 4, 5.* by the exercise of faith were now silenced, and he begins to rejoice in hope, *ver. 18. God has delivered my soul in peace*, i. e. he will deliver it, and David is as sure of the deliverance as if it were already wrought. His enemies were at war with him, and the battle was against him, but God delivered him in peace, i. e. brought him off with as much comfort as if he had never been in danger. If he did not deliver him in victory, yet he delivered him in peace, inward peace, he delivered his soul in peace; by patience and holy joy in God he kept possession of that; those are safe and easy, whose hearts and minds are kept by that peace of God which puffeth all understanding, *Phil. iv. 7.* David in his fright thought all were against him, but now he sees there were many with him, more than he imagined, his interest proved better than he expected, and this he gives to God the glory of; for it is he that raiseth us up friends when we need them, and makes them faithful to us: There were many with him, for though his subjects deserted him and went over to Absalom, yet God was with him, and the good angels: With an eye of faith he now sees him self surrounded as Elisha was, with chariots of fire, and horses of fire, and therefore triumphs thus, *there are many with me, more with me than against me*, *2 Kings vi. 16, 17.*

(2.) That his enemies should be reckoned with and brought down. They had frightened him with their menaces, *ver. 3.* but here he saith enough to frighten them, and make them tremble with more reason, and no remedy, for they could not ease themselves of their fears as David could, by faith in God. (1.) David here gives their character, as the reason why he expected God would bring them down.

(1.) They are impious and profane, and stand in no awe of God, of his authority and wrath, *ver. 19. Because they have no changes*, no afflictions, no interruption to the constant course of their prosperity, no crosses to empty them from vessel to vessel, therefore they fear not God, they live in a constant neglect and contempt of God and religion, which is the cause of all their other wickedness; and by which they are certainly marked for destruction.

(2.) They are treacherous and false, and will not be held by the most sacred and solemn engagements, *ver. 20. He hath put forth his hand against such as be at peace with him*, that never provoked him, nor gave him any cause to quarrel with them; nay, to whom he had given all possible encouragement to expect kindness from him. He has put forth his hand against those whom he had given his hand to, and has broken his covenant both with God and man, has perfidiously violated his engagements to both, than which nothing makes men riper for ruin.

(3.) They are base and hypocritical, pretending friendship while they design mischief, *ver. 21. The words of his mouth* (probably he means Abiathophel particularly) *were smoother than butter, and softer than oil*, so courteous was he and obliging, so free in his professions of respect and kindness and the proffers of his service, and yet at the same time wars in his heart, and all his courtesy was but a stratagem of war, and those very words had such a mischievous design in them, that they were as drawn swords designed to stab. They smile in a man's face, and cut his throat at the same time, as Joab that kissed and killed. Satan is such an enemy that flatters men into their ruin; *when he speaks fair believe him not.*

(2.) David here foretells their ruin.

(1.) God shall afflict them and bring them into straits and frights, and recompense tribulation to them that have troubled his people, and this in answer to the prayers of his people, *God shall hear and afflict them*, hear the cries of the oppressed, and speak terror to their oppressors, even he that abideth of old, who is God from everlasting and world without end; and who sits judge from the beginning of time, and hath always presided in the affairs of the children of men. Mortal men, though never so high and strong, will easily be crushed by an eternal God, and are a very unequal match for him. This the saints have comforted themselves with in reference to the threatening power of the church's enemies, *Hab. i. 12. Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord?*

(2.) God shall bring them down not only to the dust, but to the pit of destruction, *ver. 23.* To the bottomless pit which is called destruction, *Job xxvi. 6.* He afflicted them, *ver. 19.* to see if that would humble and reform them; but they not being wrought upon by that, he shall at last bring them to ruin. Those that are not reclaimed by the rod of affliction, will certainly be brought down into the pit of destruction. They are bloody and deceitful men, that is, the worst of men, and therefore shall not live out half their days, i. e. not half so long as men ordinarily live, and as they might have lived in a course of nature, and as they themselves expected to live. They shall live as long as the Lord will, the righteous judge, has appointed with whom the number of our months is, but he has determined to cut them off by an untimely death in the midst of their days. They were bloody men, and cut others off, and therefore God will justly cut them off; they were deceitful men, and defrauded others of the one half perhaps of what was their due, and now God will cut them short, though not of that which was their due, yet of that which they counted upon.

3. He encourageth himself and all good people to commit themselves to God, with confidence in him. He himself resolves to do so, *ver. 23. I will trust in thee*, in thy providence, and power, and mercy, and not in my own prudence, strength, or merit; when bloody and deceitful men are cut off in the midst of their days, I shall live by faith in thee. And this he will have others to do, *ver. 22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord* whoever thou art that art burdened, and whatever the burden is, *Cast thy gift upon the Lord*, so some read it; whatever blessings God has bestowed upon thee to enjoy, commit them all to his custody, and particularly commit the keeping of thy soul to him. Or, whatever it is that thou desirest God should give thee, leave it to him to give it thee in his own way and time. *Cast thy care upon the Lord*, so the LXX. to which the apostle refers, *1 Pet. v. 7.* Care is a burden, it makes the heart stoop, *Prov. xii. 25.* we must cast it upon God by faith and prayer, commit our way and works to him; let him do as seemeth him good, and we will be satisfied. To cast our burden upon God, is to stay ourselves on his providence and promise, and to be very easy in the assurance, that all shall work for good. If we do so, it is promised, (1.) That he will sustain, and both support and supply us; will himself carry us in the arms of his power; as the nurse carries the sucking child; will strengthen our spirits so by his Spirit, as that they shall sustain the infirmity. He has not promised presently to free us from that trouble which gives rise to our cares and fears; but he will provide that we be not tempted above what we are able, and that we shall be able according as we are tempted. (2.) That he will never suffer the righteous to be moved, to be so shaken by any troubles as to quit either their duty to God, or their comfort in him. However, he will not suffer them to be moved for ever; (as some read it) though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down.

P S A L M LVI.

*It seems by this and many other psalms, that even in times of the greatest trouble and distress, David never hung his harp upon the willow-trees, never unstrung it, or laid it by; but when his dangers and fears were greatest, yet still he was in tune for singing God's praises. He was in imminent peril when he penned this psalm, at least when he meditated it; yet even then his meditation of God was sweet. (1.) He complains of the malice of his enemies, and begs mercy for himself, and justice against them, ver. 1, 2—5, 6, 7. (2.) He confides in God, being assured that he took his part, comforting himself with this, that therefore he was safe, and should be victorious, and that while he lived he should praise God, ver. 3, 4—8—13. How pleasantly may a good Christian in singing this psalm rejoice in God, and praise him for what he will do as well as for what he hath done.*

¶ To the chief musician, upon Jonath-elem-rehokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

1. **B**E merciful unto me O God, for man would swallow me up: he fighting daily oppresseth me.
2. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they



they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. 3. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. 4. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. 5. Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. 6. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps when they wait for my foul. 7. Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.

David in this psalm by his faith throws himself into the hands of God, then when he had by his fear and folly thrown himself into the hands of the Philistines; it was when they took him in Gath, whither he fled for fear of Saul, forgetting the quarrel they had with him for killing Goliath; but they soon put him in mind of it, 1 Sam. xxi. 10, 11. Upon that occasion he changed his behaviour, but with so little ruffle to his temper, that then he penned both this psalm and the xxxviii. This is called *Mich-tam, a golden psalm*. So some other psalms are entitled, but this has something peculiar in the title; it is upon *Jonath clem-rechokim*, which signifies *the silent dove afar off*; some apply that to David himself, who wished for the wings of a dove on which to fly away. He was innocent and inoffensive, mild and patient as a dove, was at this time driven from his nest, from the sanctuary, Psalm lxxxiv. 3. was forced to wander afar off, to seek for shelter in distant countries, there he was like the doves of the valleys, mourning and melancholy; but silent, neither murmuring against God, nor railing at the instruments of his trouble; herein a type of Christ, who was as a sheep, dumb before the shearers, and a pattern to Christians, who wherever they are, and whatever injuries are done them, ought to be as silent doves.

In this former part of the psalm,

1. He complains to God of the malice and wickedness of his enemies, to shew what reason he had to fear them, and what cause, what need there was that God should appear against them, ver. 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* That petition includes all the good we come to the throne of grace for; if we obtain mercy there, we obtain all we can desire; and need no more to make us happy. It implies likewise our best plea, not our merit, but God's mercy, his free rich mercy. He prays he might find mercy with God, for with men he could find no mercy. When he fled from the cruel hands of Saul, he fell into the cruel hands of the Philistines, Lord, (saith he) be thou merciful to me now, or I am undone. The mercy of God is what we may trust to, and in faith pray for when we are surrounded on all sides with difficulties and dangers. He complains,

1. That his enemies were very numerous, ver. 2. *They be many that fight against me*, and think to overpower me with numbers? take notice of this, *O thou most High*, and make it to appear that wherein they deal proudly thou art above them. It is a point of honour to come into the help of one against many. And if God be on our side, how many soever they are that fight against us, we may upon good grounds boast, that there are more with us; for (as that great general said) how many do we reckon him for?

2. That they were very barbarous; they would swallow him up, ver. 1. and again, ver. 2. They sought to devour him; no less would serve, they came upon him with the utmost fury, like beasts of prey to eat up his flesh, Psalm xxvii. 2. Man would swallow him up, those of his own kind, from whom he might have expected humanity. The ravenous beasts prey not upon those of their own species; yet a bad man would devour a good one if he could. They are men weak and frail, make them to know that they are so, Psalm ix. 20.

3. They are very unanimous, ver. 6. They gathered themselves together; though they were many and of different interests among themselves, yet they united and combined against David, as Herod and Pilate against the Son of David.

4. That they were very powerful; quite too hard for him if God did not help him. They fight against me, ver. 2. They oppress me, ver. 1. I am almost overcome and borne down by them, and reduced to the last extremity.

5. That they were very subtle and crafty, ver. 6. They hide themselves, industriously cover their designs, that they may the more effectually prosecute and pursue them. They hide themselves as a lion in his den, that they may mark my steps, i. e. they observe every thing I say or do with a critical eye, that they may have something to accuse me of. Thus Christ's enemies watch him, Luke xx. 20. Or they have an eye upon all my motions, that they may gain an opportunity to do me a mischief, and may lay their snares for me.

6. That they were very spiteful and malicious; they put individious constructions upon every thing he said, though never so honestly meant and prudently expressed, ver. 5. they wrest my words, put them upon the rack, to extort that out of them which was never in them, and so they made him an offender for a word, (Isa. xxix. 21.) misrepresenting it to Saul, and aggravating it, to incense him yet more against him. They made it their whole business to ruin David, all their thoughts were against him for evil, which put evil interpretations upon all his words.

7. That they were very restless and unwearied; they continually waited for his soul, it was the life, the precious life they hunted for, it was his death they longed for, ver. 6. They sought daily against him, ver. 1. and would daily swallow him up, ver. 2. and every day they wrested his words, ver. 5. Their malice would not admit the least cessation of arms or the acts of hostility, but they were continually pushing at him. Such as this is the enmity of Satan and his agents against the kingdom of Christ and the interests of his holy religion, which if we cordially espouse, we must not think it strange to meet with such treatment as this, as though some strange thing happened to us. Our betters have been thus used; so persecuted they the prophets.

2. He encourageth himself in God, and in his promises, power and providence, ver. 3, 4. In the midst of his complaints, and before he has said what he has to say of his enemies, he triumphs in the divine protection. (1.) He resolves to make God his confidence, then when dangers were most threatening and all other confidences failed; what time I am afraid, in the day of my fear, when I am most terrified from without, and most timorous within, then I will trust in thee, and thereby my fears shall be slept. Note, There are some times which are in a special manner times of fear with God's people; and in these times, it is their duty and interest to trust in God as their God, and to know whom they have trusted. This will fix the heart and keep it in peace. (2.) He resolves to make God's promises the matter of his praises, and so we have reason to make them, ver. 4. *In God I will praise*, not only his work which he has done, but his word which he has spoken: I will give him thanks for a promise, though not yet performed in God, i. e. in his strength, and by his assistance, I will both glory in his word, and give him the glory of it. His word, i. e. his providences (so some) every event that he orders and appoints concerning me; when I speak well of God, with him I will speak well of every thing that he doth. (3.) Thus supported he will bid defiance to

Vol. II. No. LXXXV.

all adverse powers; when in God I have put my trust, I am safe, I am easy and I will not fear what flesh can do unto me: it is but flesh, and cannot do much; nay, it can do nothing but by divine permission. As we must not trust to an arm of flesh when it is engaged for us, so we must not be afraid of an arm of flesh when it is stretched out against us.

3. He foresees and foretels the fall of those that fought against him, and of all others that think to establish themselves in and by wicked practices, ver. 7. *Shall they escape by iniquity?* They hope to escape God's judgments as they escape man's by violence and fraud, and the arts of injustice and treachery; but shall they escape? No certainly, they shall not; the sin of sinners will never be their security; nor will either their impudence or their hypocrisy bring them off at God's bar; God will in his anger cast down and cast out such people, Rom. ii. 3. None are raised so high, or settled so firm, but that the justice of God can bring them down, both from their dignities, and from their confidences; *Who knows the power of God's anger?* How high it can reach, and how home it can strike.

8. Thou tellest my wandering, put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book? 9. When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know, for God is for me. 10. In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. 11. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. 12. Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee. 13. For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Several things David here comforts himself with, in the day of his distress and fear.

1. That God took particular notice of all his grievances and all his griefs, ver. 8. (1.) Of all the inconveniences of his state; *thou tellest my wanderings* and *listings*, so the old Translation. David was now but a young man (under thirty) and yet he had had many removes, from his father's house to the court, thence to the camp, and now driven out to sojourn where he could find a place, but not allowed to rest any-where; hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; continual terrors and toils attended him; but this comforted him, that God kept a particular account of all his motions, and numbered all the weary steps he took by night or by day. Note, God takes cognizance of all the afflictions of his people, and those whom men have cast out from their converse, he has not cast out from his care and love. (2.) Of all the impressions those made upon his spirit; when he was wandering, he was often weeping; and therefore prays *put thou my tears into thy bottle*, to be preserved and looking upon, nay I know they are in thy book, the book of thy remembrance; God has a bottle and a book of his people's tears, both those for their sins and those for their afflictions. This intimates, (1.) That he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. As the blood of his saints, and their deaths are precious in the sight of the Lord, so are their tears, not one of them shall fall to the ground. *I have seen thy tears*, 2 Kings. xx. 5. *I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself*, Jer. xxi. 18. (2.) That he will remember them, and review them, as we do the accounts we have booked. Paul was mindful of Timothy's tears, 2 Tim. i. 4. and God will not forget the sorrows of his people. The tears of God's persecuted people are bottled up, and sealed among God's treasures; and when these books come to be opened, they will be found vials of wrath, which will be poured out upon their persecutors, whom God will surely reckon with for all the tears they have forced from his people's eyes; and they will be breasts of consolation to God's mourners, whose sackcloth will be turned into garments of praise: God will comfort his people according to the time wherein he has afflicted them, and give to them to reap in joy, who sowed in tears. What was sown a tear shall come up a pearl.

2. That his prayers will be powerful for the defeat and discomfiture of his enemies, as well as for his own support and encouragement, ver. 9. *When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back*; I need no other weapons but prayers and tears, *this I know, for God is for me*, to plead my cause, to protect and deliver me; and if God be for me, who can be against me, so as to prevail? The saints have God for them; they may know it; and to him they must cry when they are surrounded with enemies; which if they do in faith, they shall find a divine power exerted and engaged for them; their enemies shall be made to turn back: their spiritual enemies, against whom we fight best upon our knees, Eph. vi. 18.

3. That his faith in God would set himself above the fear of man, ver. 10, 11. Here he repeats with a strong pathos what he had said, ver. 4. *In God will I praise his word*, i. e. I will firmly depend upon the promise for the sake of him that made it, who is true and faithful, and has wisdom, power and goodness enough to make it good. When we give credit to a man's bill, we honour him that drew it; so when we do and suffer for God in a dependence upon his promise, not staggering at it, we give glory to God, we praise his word, and so give praise to him. Having thus put his trust in God, he looks with a holy contempt upon the threatening power of man. *In God have I put my trust*, and in him only, and therefore *I will not be afraid what man can do unto me*, though I know very well what he would do if he could, ver. 11. This triumphant word, so expressive of a holy magnanimity, the apostle puts into the mouth of every true believer, whom he makes a christian hero, Heb. xiii. 6. We may each of us boldly say, *The Lord is my helper*, and then *I will not fear what man shall do unto me*; for he has no power but what he has given him from above.

4. That he was in bonds to God, ver. 12. *Thy vows are upon me, O God*, Not upon me as a burthen which I am loaded with, but as a badge, which I glory in, as that by which I am known to be thy menial servant; not upon me as fetters that hamper me (such as superstitious vows) but upon me as a bridle that restrains me from what would be hurtful to me, and directs me in the way of my duty. Thy vows, i. e. the vows I have made to thee, to which thou art not only a witness but a party, and which thou hast commanded and encouraged me to make. It is probable, he means especially those vows, which he had made to God in the day of his trouble and distress, which he would retain the remembrance of, and acknowledge the obligations of when his fright was over. Note, It ought to be the matter of our consideration and joy, that *the vows of God are upon us*; our baptismal vows renewed at the Lord's Table, our occasional vows under convictions, under corrections, by these we are bound to live to God.

5. That he should still have more and more occasion to praise him; *I will render praises unto thee*. This is part of the performance of his vows: for vows of thankfulness properly accompany prayers for mercy; and when the mercy is received must be made good. When we study what we shall



render, this is the least we can resolve upon, to render praises to God. Poor returns for rich receivings. Two things he will praise God for.

1. For what he had done for him, *ver. 13. Thou hast delivered my soul, my life from death, which was just ready to seize me.* If God have delivered us from sin, either from the commission of it by preventing grace, or from the punishment of it by pardoning mercy, we have reason to own that he has thereby delivered our souls from death, which is the wages of sin: If we, who were by nature dead in sin, are quickened together with Christ, and are made spiritually alive, we have reason to own that God has delivered our souls from death.

2. For what he would do for him: *Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and so hast given me a new life, and thereby hast given me an earnest of further mercy, that thou wilt deliver my feet from falling:* Thou hast done the greater, and therefore thou wilt do the lesser, thou hast begun a good work and therefore thou wilt carry it on and perfect it. This may be taken either as the matter of his prayer, pleading his experience, or, as the matter of his praise, raising his expectations; and those that know how to praise in faith, will give God thanks for mercies in promise and prospect, as well as in possession. See here, (1.) What David hopes for, that God would deliver his feet from falling either into sin, which would wound his conscience, or into the appearance of sin, from which his enemies would take occasion to wound his good name. Those that think they stand must take heed lest they fall, because the best stand no longer than God is pleased to uphold them. We are weak, our way is slippery, many stumbling-blocks are in it, our spiritual enemies are industrious to thrust us down, and therefore we are concerned by faith and prayer to commit ourselves to his care, who *keepeth the feet of his saints.* (3.) What he builds this hope upon; *Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and therein hast magnified thy power and goodness, and put me into a capacity of receiving further mercy from thee; and now wilt thou not secure and crown thy own work?* God never brought his people out of Egypt to slay them in the wilderness. He that in conversation delivers the soul from so great a death as sin is, will not fail to preserve it to his heavenly kingdom. (3.) What he designs in these hopes; *that I may walk before God in the light of the living, i. e.* (1.) That I may get to heaven, the only land of light and life; for in this world darkness and death reigns. (2.) That I may do my duty while this life lasts. Note, This we should aim at in all our desires and expectations of deliverance both from sin and trouble, that we may do God so much the better service; *that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we may serve him without fear.*

P S A L M LVII.

This psalm is very like that which goes next before it, was penned upon a like occasion, when David was both in danger of trouble and in temptation to sin; it begins as that did, *Be merciful to me; the method also is the same;* (1.) He begins with prayer and complaint: *yet not without some assurance of speeding in his request, ver. 1—6.* (2.) He concludes with joy and praise, *ver. 7—11.* So that from hence we may take direction and encouragement both in our supplications, and in our thanksgivings, and may offer both to God in singing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

1. **B**E merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. 2. I will cry unto God most high: unto God, that performeth all things for me. 3. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up: Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. 4. My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. 5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth. 6. They have prepared a net for my steps, my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.

The title of this psalm has one word new in it, *Al-taschith; destroy not:* Some make it to be only some known tune to which this psalm was set, others apply it to the occasion and matter of the psalm; *destroy not, i. e.* David would not let Saul be destroyed, when now in the cave there was a fair opportunity of doing it, and his servants would fain have done it; no, saith David, *Destroy him not, 1 Sam. xxiv. 4—6.* Or rather, God would not let David be destroyed by Saul; he suffered him to persecute David, but still under this limitation, *destroy him not;* as he permitted Satan to afflict Job, *only save his life.* David must not be destroyed, *for a blessing is in him, Isa. lvi. 8.* even Christ, the best of blessings. When David was in the cave in imminent peril, he here tells us what were the workings of his heart towards God; and happy they that have such good thoughts as these in their minds when they are in danger.

1. He supports himself with faith and hope in God, and prayer to him, *ver. 1, 2.* Seeing himself surrounded with enemies, he looks up to God with that imitable prayer, *Be merciful to me, O Lord;* which he again repeats, and it is no vain repetition. *Be merciful unto me.* It was the publican's prayer, *Luke xviii. 13.* It is a pity any should use it slightly and profanely, should cry *God be merciful to us, or Lord have mercy upon us,* when they mean only to express their wonder or surprise or vexation, but God and his mercy are not in all their thoughts. It is with much devout affection that David here prays. *Be merciful unto me, O Lord;* look with compassion upon me, and in thy love and pity redeem them. To recommend himself to God's mercy, he here professeth,

1. That all his dependance is upon God. *My soul trusteth in thee, ver. 1.* He did not only profess trust in God, but his soul did indeed rely upon God only, with a sincere devotion and self-dedication, and an entire complacency and satisfaction. He goes to God, and at the footstool of the throne of his grace humbly professeth his confidence in him, *in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,* as the chickens take shelter under the wings of the hen, when the birds of prey are ready to strike at them; *until these calamities be overpast.* (1.) He was confident his troubles would end well in due time; *these calamities will be overpast;* the storm will blow over, *non est male nunc & olim fiet.* Our Lord Jesus comforted himself with this in his sufferings, *Luke xxii. 37.* *The things concerning me have an end.* (2.) He was very easy under the divine protection in the mean time. (1.)

He comforted himself in the goodness of God's nature, by which he is inclined to favour and protect his people, as the hen is by instinct to shelter her young ones: God comes upon the wing to the help of his people, which notes a speedy deliverance, *Psal. xvii. 10.* and takes them under his wing, which notes warmth and refreshment, even when the calamities are upon them, see *Matt. xxiii. 37.* (2.) In the promise of his word, and the covenant of his grace; for it may refer to the out-stretched wings of the cherubims, between which God is said to dwell, *Psal. lxxx. 1.* and from whence he gave his oracles. To God, as the God of grace, will I fly, and his promise shall be my refuge, and a sure passport it will be through all these dangers. God by his promise, offers himself to us to be trusted, we by our faith must accept of him, and put our trust in him.

2. That all his desire is towards God, *ver. 2. I will cry unto God most high, for succour and relief to him that is most high will I lift up my soul, and pray earnestly, even unto God that performeth all things for me.* Note, (1.) In every thing that befalls us we ought to stand upon the hand of God; whatever is done is of his performing, in it his counsel is accomplished, and the scripture is fulfilled. (2.) Whatever God performs concerning his people, it will appear in the issue to have been performed for them, and for their benefit: Though God be high, most high, yet he condescends so low, as to take care that all things be made to work for good to them. (3.) This is a good reason why we should in all our straits and difficulties cry unto him; not only pray but pray earnestly.

3. That all his expectation is from God, *ver. 3. He shall send from heaven and save me.* They that make God their only refuge, and fly to him by faith and prayer, may be sure of salvation in his way and time. Observe here, (1.) Whence he expects the salvation; from heaven. Look which way he will on this earth, and refuge fails, no help appears, but he looks for it from heaven; they that lift up their hearts to things above, may from thence expect all good. (2.) What the salvation is that he expects; he trusts God will save him from the reproach of those that would swallow him up, that aimed to ruin him, and in the mean time did all they could to vex him. Some read it, *He shall send from heaven and save me, for he hath put to shame him that would swallow me up;* he hath disappointed their designs against me hitherto, and therefore he will perfect my deliverance. (3.) What he will ascribe his salvation to; *God shall send forth his mercy and truth.* God is good in himself and faithful to every word that he hath spoken, and so he makes it appear when he works deliverance for his people. We need no more to make us happy, but to have the benefit of the mercy and truth of God, *Psal. xxv. 10.*

2. He represents the power and malice of his enemies, *ver. 4. My soul is among lions;* so fierce and furious was Saul, and those about him, against David, he might have been as safe in a den of lions, as among such men that were continually roaring against him, and ready to make a prey of him. They are set on fire, and breathe nothing but flame; they set on fire the course of nature, inflaming one another against David, and they were themselves set on fire of hell, *Jam. iii. 6.* They were sons of men, from whom one might have expected something of the reason and compassion of a man: but they were beasts of prey in the shape of men, their teeth which they gnashed upon him, and with which they hoped to tear him to pieces and to eat him up, were spears and arrows, fitted for mischiefs and murders; and their tongue with which they cursed him and wounded his reputation, was as a sharp sword to cut and kill, see *Psal. xlii. 10.* A spiteful tongue is a dangerous weapon, wherewith Satan's instruments fight against God's people. He describes their malicious projects against him, *ver. 6.* and shews the issue of them; *that have prepared a net for my steps* in which to take me, that I might not again escape out of their hands; *They have digged a pit round me,* that I might ere I was aware run headlong into it; see the policies of the church's enemies, see the pains they took to do mischief. But let us see what comes of it. (1.) It is indeed some disturbance to David, *my soul is bowed down.* It made him droop and hang the head, to think that there should be those that bore him so much ill will. But (2.) It was destruction to themselves; they digged a pit for David, *into the midst whereof they are fallen:* The mischief they designed against David returned upon themselves, and they were themselves embarrassed in their counsels; then when Saul was pursuing David, the Philistines were invading him; nay, in the cave, when Saul thought David should fall into his hands, he fell into the hands of David, and lay at his mercy.

3. He prays to God to glorify himself and his own great name, *ver. 5.* whatever comes of me and my interest, be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, be thou praised by the holy angels, those glorious inhabitants of the upper world; and let thy glory be above, or over all the earth, let the inhabitants of this earth be brought to know and praise thee. Thus God's glory should lie nearer our hearts, and we should be more concerned for that than for any particular interests of our own. When David was in the greatest distress and disgrace, he did not pray, *Lord, exalt me,* but *Lord, exalt thine own name.* Thus the Son of David, when his soul was troubled, and he prayed, *Father save me from this hour,* presently withdrew that petition, and presented this in the room of it, *for this cause came I to this hour. Father, glorify thy name,* *John xii. 27, 28.* Or it may be taken as a plea to enforce his petition for deliverance, *Lord, send from heaven to save me,* and thereby thou wilt glorify thyself as the God both of heaven and earth. Our best encouragement in prayer is taken from the glory of God, and to that therefore more than our own comfort, we should have an eye in all our petitions for particular mercies; for this is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which regulates and directs all the rest, *Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*

7. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. 8. Awake up my glory, awake psalter and harp: I myself will awake early. 9. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. 10. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. 11. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

How strangely is the tune altered here? David's prayers and complaints by the lively actings of faith, are here all of a sudden turned into praises and thanksgivings; his sackcloth is loosed, and he is girded with gladness, and his hallelujahs are as fervent as his hosannas. This should make us in love with prayer, that sooner or later it will be swallowed up in praise. Observe,

1. How he prepares himself for the duty of praise, *ver. 7. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed.* My heart is erect, or lifted up, so some, which was bowed down, *ver. 6. My heart is fixed;* (1.) With reference to God's providences, it is prepared for every event, being stayed upon God, *Psal. cxii. 7.* *Isa. xxvi. 3. My heart is fixed,* and then none of these things move me; *Acts xx. 24.* If by the grace of God we be brought into this even composed frame of spirit, we have great reason to be thankful. (2.) With reference



reference to the worship of God; *my heart is fixed to sing and give praise.* It implied, that the heart is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose in religion further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be fixed; fixed for the duty, fitted and put in frame for it; fixed in the duty by a close application; *attending on the Lord without distraction.*

2. How he excites himself to the duty of praise, *ver. 1. Awake up my glory, i. e. my tongue; our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God; or, my soul, that must be first awakened; dull and sleepy devotion will never be acceptable to God, we must stir up ourselves, and all that is within us to praise God; with a holy fire must that sacrifice be kindled, and ascend in a holy flame. David's tongue will lead, and his psaltery and harp will follow in these hymns of praise. I myself will awake, not only I would not be dead and drowsy and careless in this work, but I will be in the most lively frame that may be, as one newly awakened out of a refreshing sleep. He will awake early to this work, early in the morning, to begin the day with God; early in the beginnings of a mercy; when God is coming towards us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises.*

3. How he pleases himself, and (as I may say) even prides himself in the work of praise; so far is he from being ashamed to own his obligations to God, and dependance upon him, that he resolves to *praise him among the people, and to sing unto him among the nations, ver. 9.* This intimates, (1.) That his own heart was much affected and enlarged in praising God; he would even make the earth ring with his sacred songs, that all might take notice how much he thought himself indebted to the goodness of God. (2.) That he desired to bring others in to join with him in praising God; he will publish God's praises among the people, that the knowledge and fear and love of God might be propagated, and the ends of the earth might see his salvation. When David was driven out into heathen lands, he would not only not worship their gods, but would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him, wherever he went, would endeavour to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet savour of it behind him. David, in his psalms, which fill the universal church, and will to the end of time, may be said to be still *praising God among the people, and singing to him among the nations,* for all good people make use of his words in praising God. Thus St. John in his writings is said to *prophecy again before many people and nations,* Rev. x. 11.

4. How he furnished himself with matter for praise, *ver. 10.* That which was the matter of his hope and comfort, *ver. 3. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth,* it is here the matter of his thanksgiving, *thy mercy is great unto the heavens, i. e. it is great beyond conception and expression, and thy truth unto the clouds, i. e. it is great beyond discovery, for what eye can reach that which is wrapped up in the clouds? God's mercy and truth reach to the heavens, for they will bring all such to heaven as lay up their treasure in them, and build their hopes upon them. God's mercy and truth are praised even to the heavens, i. e. by all the bright and blessed inhabitants of the upper world, who are continually raising God's praises to the highest, while David on earth is endeavouring to spread his praises to the furthest, ver. 9.*

5. How he leaves it at last to God to glorify his own name, *ver. 11. Be thou exalted, O God.* The same words which he had used, *ver. 5.* to sum up his prayers in, he here sets again (and no vain repetition) to sum up his praises in; Lord, I desire to exalt thy name, and that all the creatures may exalt it; but what can the best of us do towards it? Lord, take the work into thine own hands; do it thyself, *be thou exalted O God.* In the praises of the church triumphant thou art exalted to the heavens, and in the praises of the church militant, thy glory is throughout all the earth; but thou art above all the blessing and praise of both, (*Neh. ix. 5.*) and therefore, Lord, exalt thyself above the heavens, and above all the earth; *Father, glorify thine own name: Thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again.*

## P S A L M LVIII.

It is the probable conjecture of some (*Amyraldus particularly*) that before Saul began to persecute David by force of arms, and raised the militia to seize him, he formed a process against him by course of law, upon which he was condemned unheard, and attainted as a traitor by the great supreme council, or court of judicature, and then proclaimed an outlaw, *qui caput gerit lupinum, whom any man might kill, and no man might protect; and upon occasion of passing this bill of attainder which the elders did to carry favour with Saul, David penned this psalm, wherein,* (1.) He describes their sin, and aggravates that, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) He imprecates and foretells their ruin, and the judgments which the righteous God will bring upon them for the injustice, *ver. 6—9.* Which would redound, (1.) To the comfort of the saints, *ver. 10.* (2.) To the glory of God, *ver. 11.* Sin appears here both exceeding sinful and exceeding dangerous, and God a just avenger of wrong, with which we should be affected in singing this psalm.

¶ To the chief musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

1. **D**O ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? 2. Yea, in heart ye work wickedness, ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. 3. The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. 4. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear: 5. Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

We have reason to think that this psalm refers to the malice of Saul and his juniiaries against David, because it bears the same inscription, Al-taschith, and Michtam of David, with that which goes before and that which follows, both which appear by the title to have been penned with reference to that persecution, through which God preserved him that he was not destroyed, Al-taschith, and therefore the psalms he then penned were precious to him, Michtams, David's jewels, as Dr. Hammond translates it.

In these verses David, not as a king, for he was not yet come to the throne, but as a prophet, in God's name, arraigns and convicts his judges, with more authority and justice than they shewed in prosecuting him. Two things he charged them with.

The corruption of their government. They were a congregation, a bench of justices, nay perhaps a congress or convention of the states, from whom our might have expected fair dealing, for they were men learned in

the laws, had been brought up in the study of the statutes and judgments, which were so righteous, that those of other nations were not to be compared with them. One cannot think a congregation of such could be bribed and biassed with pensions, and yet it seems they were, because the son of Kishi could do that for them which the son of Jesse could not, 1 Sam. xxii. 7. He had vineyards and fields, and preferments to give them, and therefore to please him they would do any thing right or wrong. O all the melancholy views which Solomon took of this earth and its grievances, nothing vexed him so much, as to see that in the place of judgment wickedness was there, Eccl. iii. 16. So it was in Saul's time.

(1.) The judges would not do right, would not protect or vindicate oppressed innocency, *ver. 1. Do ye indeed speak righteousness, or judge up-rightly?* No, you are far from it, your own consciences can not but tell you that you do not discharge the trust reposed in you as magistrates, by which you are obliged to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well. Is this the justice you pretend to administer? Is this the patronage, this the countenance which an honest man, and an honest cause may expect from you? remember you are sons of men, mortal and dying, and that stand upon the same level before God with the meanest of those you trample upon, and must yourselves be called to an account and judged. You are sons of men, and therefore we may appeal to yourselves, and to that law of nature which is written in every man's heart, *Do ye indeed speak righteousness?* And will not your second thoughts correct what you have done? Nae, it is good for us often to reflect upon what we say, with this serious question, *Do we indeed speak righteousness?* That we may unsay what we have spoken amiss, and may proceed no farther in it.

(2.) They did a great deal of wrong, they used their power for the support of injury and oppression, *ver. 2. In heart you work wickedness.* All the wickedness of the life is wrought in the heart. It intimates, that they wrought with a great deal of plot and management, not by surprise, but with premeditation and design, and with a strong inclination to it, and resolution in it. The more there is of the heart in any act of wickedness, the worse it is, Eccles. viii. 11. And what was their wickedness? It follows, *you weigh the violence of your hands in the earth, or in the land,* the peace of which you are appointed to be the conservators of. They did all the violence and injury they could either to enrich or revenge themselves, and they weighed it, i. e. (1.) They did it with a great deal of craft and caution, you frame it by rules and lines, so the word signifies, that it may effectually answer your mischievous intentions; such matters are you of the art of oppression. (2.) They did it under colour of justice. They held the balances, (the emblem of justice) in their hands as if they designed to do right, and right is expected from them, but the result is violence and oppression, which is done the more effectually for being done under the umbrage of law and right.

2. The corruption of their nature. This was the root of bitterness from which that gall and wormwood sprung, *ver. 3. the wicked, who in heart work wickedness, are estranged from the womb,* estranged from God and all good, alienated from the divine life and its principles, powers and pleasures, Eph. iv. 18. A sinful state is a state of estrangement from that acquaintance with God, and service of him which we were made for. Let none wonder that these wicked men dare do such things, for wickedness is bred in the bone with them, they brought it into the world with them, they have in their natures a strong inclination to it, they learned it from their wicked parents, and have been trained up in it by a bad education; they are called and not mis-called, transgressors from the womb, one can therefore expect no other but that they will *deal very treacherously,* see Isa. xlviii. 8. They go astray from God and their duty as soon as they be born, i. e. as soon as possibly they can; the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts, presently appears with the first operations of reason; as the wheat springs up, the tares spring up with it. Three instances are here given of the corruption of nature.

(1.) Falshood. They soon learn to speak lies, and bend their tongue like their bow for that purpose, *Ser. ix. 3.* How soon will little children tell a lie to excuse a fault, or in their own commendation; no sooner can they speak but they speak to God's dishonour; tongue sins are some of the first of our actual transgressions.

(2.) Malice. Their poison, i. e. their ill-will, and the spite they bore to goodness and all good men, particularly to David, was like the poison of a serpent, innate, venemous, and very mischievous, and that which they can never be cured of. We pity a dog that is poisoned by accident, but hate a serpent that is poisonous by nature. Such was the cursed enmity in this serpent's brood against the Lord and his anointed.

(3.) Untractableness. They are malicious, and nothing will work upon them, no reason, no kindness, to mollify them and bring them to a better temper. *They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear,* ver. 4. 5. The Psalmist having compared these wicked men whom he here complains of, to serpents for their poisonous malice; takes occasion from thence, upon another account to compare them to the deaf adder and viper, concerning which there was then this vulgar tradition, that whereas by music, or some other art, they had a way of charming serpents, so as either to destroy them or at least disable them to do mischief; this deaf adder would lay one ear to the ground, and stop the other with her tail, so that she could not hear the voice of the enchanter, and so defeated the intention of it, and secured herself. The using of this comparison doth neither verify the story, nor, if it were true, justify the use of this enchantment; for it is only an allusion to the report of such a thing, to illustrate the obstinacy of sinners in a sinful way. God's design in his word and providence, is to cure serpents of their malignity; to this end, how wise, how powerful, how well chosen are the charms! how forcible the right words! But all in vain with the most of men; and what is the reason? It is because they will not hearken. None so deaf as those that will not hear; we have piped unto men, and they have not danced; how should they, when they have stopped their ears?

6. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD. 7. Let them melt away as waters, which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. 8. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. 9. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath. 10. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. 11. So that a man shall say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.



In these verses we have,

1. David's prayers against his enemies, and all the like enemies of God's church and people: for as sure he looks upon them, and is actuated by a public spirit in praying against them, and not by any private revenge.

(1.) He prays that they might be disabled to do any further mischief, ver. 6. *Break their teeth, O God.* Not so much that they might not feed themselves, as that they might not be able to make a prey of others, *Psalms* iii. 7. He doth not say, break their necks; no, let them live to repent, *slay them not, lest my people forget;* but break their teeth, for they are lions, they are young lions that live by rapine.

(2.) That they might be disappointed in the plots they had already laid, and might not gain their point; *When he bendeth his bow;* and takes aim to shoot his arrows at the upright in heart, *let them be as cut in pieces,* ver. 7. Let them fall at his feet, and never come near the mark.

(3.) That they and their interest might waste and come to nothing; that they might melt away as waters that run continually, i. e. as the waters of a land flood, which though they seem formidable for a while, soon soak into the ground, or return to their channels; or, in general, as water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up again, but gradually dries away and disappears. Such shall the floods of ungodly men be which make us afraid sometimes, *Psalms* xviii. 4. So shall the proud waters be reduced which threaten to go over our soul, *Psalms* cxlv. 4, 5. Let us by faith then see what they shall be, and then we shall not fear what they are. He prays, ver. 8. that they might melt as a snail, which wastes by her own motion, in every stretch it makes, leaving some of its moisture behind, which by degrees must needs consume it, though it make a path to shine after it. He that like a snail in her house, is *plenis sui*, full of himself, that pleaseth himself, and trusts to himself, doth but consume himself, and will quickly bring himself to nothing. And he prays, that they might be like the untimely birth of a woman, which dies as soon as it begins to live, and never sees the sun. Job in his passion wished himself had been such a one, *Job* iii. 16. but he knew not what he said. We may in faith pray against the designs of the church's enemies, as the prophet doth, *Hos.* ix. 14. *Give them, O Lord, what wilt thou give them? Give them a miscarriage womb, and dry breasts.* Which explains this here.

2. His prediction of their ruin, ver. 9. Before your pots can feel the heat of a fire of thorns made under them, which they will presently do, for it is a quick fire and violent while it lasts, so speedily with such a hasty and violent flame God shall hurry them away, as terribly and as irresistibly as with a whirlwind, as it were alive, as it were in fury. The proverbial expressions are somewhat difficult, but the sense is plain; (1.) That the judgments of God oftentimes surprise wicked people in the midst of their jollity, and hurry them away of a sudden. When they are beginning to walk in the light of their own fire, and the sparks of their own kindling, they are made to lie down in sorrow, *Isa.* i. 11. and their laughter proves like the crackling of thorns under a pot, the comfort of which is soon gone, ere they can say, *Alas, I am worn,* *Eccles.* vii. 6. (2.) That there is no standing before the destruction that comes from the Almighty; for who knows the power of God's anger? when God will take sinners away dead or alive, they cannot contest with him: *The wicked is driven away in their wickedness.*

Now there are two things which the psalmist promiseth himself would be the good effects of sinners destruction.

1. That saints would be encouraged and comforted by it, ver. 10. *The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance;* the pomp and power, the prosperity and success of the wicked is a discouragement to the righteous, it saddens their hearts and weakens their hands, and is sometimes a strong temptation to them to question their foundations, *Psal.* lxxiii. 2—13. But when they see the judgments of God hurrying them away, and just vengeance taken on them for all the mischief they have done to the people of God, they rejoice in the satisfaction thereby given to their doubts, and the confirmation thereby given to their faith in the providence of God, and his justice and righteousness in governing the world; they shall rejoice in the victory thus gained over that temptation, by seeing their end, *Psal.* lxxiii. 17. *He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked,* i. e. there shall be abundance of blood shed, *Psal.* lxxiii. 23. and it shall be as great a refreshment to the saints to see God glorified in the ruin of sinners, as it is to a weary traveller to have his feet washed. It shall likewise contribute to their satisfaction; the sight of the vengeance shall make them tremble before God, *Psal.* cxix. 120. and shall convince them of the evil of sin, and the obligations they lie under to that God who pleads their cause, and will suffer no man to do them wrong, and go unpunished for it. The joy of the saints in the destruction of the wicked, is then a holy joy, and justifiable when it helps to make them holy and to purify them from sin.

2. That sinners would be convinced and converted by it, ver. 11. The vengeance of God sometimes takes on the wicked in this world, will bring men to say, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous.* Any man may draw this inference from such providences, and many a man shall, who before denied even these plain truths, or doubted of them. Some shall have this confession extorted from them, others shall have their minds so changed, that they shall willingly own it, and thank God who has given them to see it, and see it with satisfaction: That God is, and (1.) That he is the bountiful rewarder of his saints and servants. *Verily,* (however it be, so it may be read) *there is a fruit to the righteous,* whatever damage a man may sustain, whatever hazard he may run, and whatever hardship he may undergo for his religion, he shall not only be no loser, but an unspeakable gainer by it in the issue. Even in this world there is a reward for the righteous, they shall be recompensed in the earth. They shall be taken notice of, honoured and protected, that seemed slighted, despised and abandoned. (2.) That he is the righteous governor of the world, and will surely reckon with the enemies of his kingdom. *Verily,* however it be, though wicked people prosper, and bid defiance to divine justice; yet it shall be made to appear to their confusion, that the world is not governed by chance, but by a Being of infinite wisdom and justice; there is a God that judgeth in the earth, though he has prepared his throne in the heavens. He presides in all the affairs of the children of men, and directs and disposeth them according to the counsel of his will to his own glory; and he will punish the wicked not only in the world to come, but in the earth, where they have laid up their treasure, and promised themselves a happiness: In the earth; that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executeth, and they may be taken (earnestly of a judgment to come. He is a God, so we read it) not a weak as man; not an angel, not a mere name, not (as the atheists suggest) a creature of mens fear and fancy, not a deified hero, not the sun and moon, as idolaters imagined; but a God, a self-existent, perfect being; he it is that judgeth the earth, his favour therefore let us seek, from whom every man's judgment proceed, and to him let all judgment be referred.

# P S A L M LIX.

This psalm is of the same nature and scope with six or seven foregoing psalms: they are all David's complaints of the malice of his enemies,

and their cursed and cruel designs against him; his prayers and prophecies against them; and his comfort and confidence in God as his God: The first is the language of nature, and may be allowed: The second a prophetic spirit, looking forward to Christ and the enemies of his kingdom, and therefore not to be drawn into a precedent: The third of grace and a most holy faith, which ought to be imitated by every one of us. In this psalm, (1.) He prays to God to defend and deliver him from his enemies, representing them as very ill men, barbarous, malicious, and atheistical, ver. 1—7. (2.) He foresees and foretells the destruction of his enemies, which he would give to God the glory of, ver. 8—17. As far as it appears that any of the particular enemies of God's people fall under these characters, we may in singing this psalm read their doom, and foresee their ruin.

¶ To the chief musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David: when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

1. **D**ELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. 2. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men. 3. For lo, they lie in wait for my soul; the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD. 4. They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me and behold. 5. Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, for the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah. 6. They return at evening: They make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 7. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips; for who (say they) doth hear?

The title of this psalm acquaints us particularly with the occasion on which it was penned, it was when Saul sent a party of his guards to beset David's house in the night, that they might seize him and kill him; we have the story, *1 Sam.* xix. 11. It was when his hostilities against David were newly begun, and he had but just before narrowly escaped Saul's javelin. These first eruptions of Saul's malice could not but put David into disorder, and be both grievous and terrifying, and yet he kept up his communion with God, and such a composure of mind, as that he was never out of frame for prayer and praises; happy they whose intercourse with heaven is not intercepted or broken in upon by their cares, or griefs, or fears, or any of the hurries (whether outward or inward) of an afflicted state.

In these verses,

1. David prays to be delivered out of the hands of his enemies, and that their cruel designs against him might be defeated, ver. 12. *Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God,* thou art God and canst deliver me; my God under whose protection I have put myself, and thou hast promised me to be a God all-sufficient, and therefore in honour and faithfulness thou wilt deliver me. Set me on high out of the reach of the power and malice of them that rise up against me, and above the fear of it. Let me be safe, and see myself so, safe and easy, safe and satisfied. O deliver me, and save me. He cries out as one ready to perish, and that had his eye to God only for salvation and deliverance. He prays, ver. 4. *Awake to help me,* take cognizance of my case, behold that with an eye of pity, and exert thy power for my relief. Thus the disciples in a storm awaked Christ, saying, *Master, save us, we perish.* And thus earnestly should we pray daily, to be defended and delivered from our spiritual enemies, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of our own hearts, which war against our spiritual life.

2. He pleads for deliverance. Our God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him, to order our cause before him, and to fill our mouth with arguments; not to move him, but to move ourselves; David doth so here.

1. He pleads the ill character of his enemies; they are workers of iniquity, and therefore not only his enemies, but God's enemies; they are bloody men, and therefore not only his enemies, but enemies to all mankind; Lord, let not the workers of iniquity prevail against one that is a worker of righteousness; nor bloody men, against a merciful man.

2. He pleads their malice against him, and the imminent danger he was in from them, ver. 3. Their spite is great, they aim at my soul, my life, my better part; they are subtle and very politic, they lie in wait, taking opportunity to do me a mischief; they are all mighty, men of honour and estates, and interest in court and country; they are in a confederacy, they are united by league, and actually gathered together against me; combined both in consultation and action. They are very ingenious in their contrivances, and very industrious in the prosecution of them, ver. 4. *They run and prepare themselves,* with the utmost speed and fury to do me a mischief. He takes particular notice of the brutish carriage of the messengers that Saul sent to take him, ver. 6. *They return at evening* from the posts assigned them in the day, to apply themselves to the works of darkness (their night-work, which may well be their day-shame) and then they make a noise like a hound in pursuit of a hare: Thus did David's enemies when they came to take him, raise an outcry against him as a rebel, and a traitor, and a man not fit to live; with this clamour they went round about the city, to put David into an ill name, if possible, to set the mob against him, at least to prevent their being incensed against them, which otherwise they had reason to fear they would be, so much was David their darling. Thus the persecutors of our Lord Jesus, who are compared to dogs, *Psalms* xxii. 16. run him down with noise, for else they could not have taken him, at least not on the feast day, lest there should be an uproar among the people. They belch out with their mouth the malice that boils in their hearts, ver. 7. *Swords are in their lips,* i. e. Reproaches that wound my heart with grief, *Psalms* xlii. 10. and slanders that wound my reputation, and stab that: They were continually suggesting that which drew and whet Saul's sword against him, and the fault is laid upon the false accusers: The sword perhaps had not been in Saul's hand, if it had not been first in their lips.

3. He pleads his own innocency, not as to God, he was never backward to own himself guilty before him, but as to his persecutors: what they charged him with was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done any thing to deserve such treatment from them, ver. 3. *Not for my transgressions, nor for my sin, O Lord,* thou knowest, who knowest all things. And again, ver. 4. *without my fault.* Note, (1.) The innocency of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves, yet for Christ's sake are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly. (2.) Though our innocency will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves



ourselves well towards those that behave themselves ill towards us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. (3.) If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocency, we may with humble confidence appeal to God and beg of him to plead our injured cause, which he will do in due time.

4. He pleads that his enemies were profane and atheistical, and bolstered themselves up in their enmity to David, with the contempt of God; *For who (say they) doth hear?* ver. 7. Not God himself, *Pfalm x. 11.—xciv. 7.* Note, It is not strange, if those regard not what they say, who have made themselves believe that God regards not what they say.

3. He refers himself and his cause to the just judgment of God, ver. 5. The Lord, the judge, be judge between him and his persecutors! In this appeal to God he has an eye to him as the Lord of hosts that has power to execute judgment, having all creatures, even hosts of angels at his command. And as the God of Israel, to whom he was in a peculiar manner King and Judge, and would appear on the behalf of those that are upright, that are Israelites indeed. When Saul's hosts persecuted him, he had recourse to God as the Lord of all hosts; when those maligned him whose spirit were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, he had recourse to God as the God of Israel. He desires, (*i. e.* he is very sure) that God will awake to visit all the nations, will make an early and exact enquiry into the controversies and quarrels that are among the children of men: there will be a day of visitation, *Isa. x. 3.* and to that day David refers himself with this solemn appeal, *Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors; Selah;* mark that. (1.) If David were conscious to himself that he was a wicked transgressor, he would not expect to find mercy: But as to his enemies he could say he was no transgressor at all, ver. 3, 4. *Not for my transgression and therefore thou wilt appear for me:* As to God he could say he was no wicked transgressor; for though he had transgressed, he was a penitent transgressor, and did not obstinately persist in what he had done amiss. (2.) He knew his enemies were wicked transgressors, wilful and malicious, and hardened in their transgression, both against God and man, and therefore he sues for justice against them; judgment without mercy. Let not those expect to find mercy who never shewed mercy, for such are wicked transgressors.

8. But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. 9. *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee:* for God is my defence. 10. The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. 11. Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O LORD our shield. 12. *For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak.* 13. Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob; unto the ends of the earth. Selah. 14. And at evening let them return, and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied. 16. But I will sing of thy power: yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. 17. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

David here encourageth himself in reference to the threatening power of his enemies, with a pious resolution to wait upon God, and a believing expectation that he should yet praise him.

1. He resolves to wait upon God, ver. 9. *Because of his strength,* either the strength of his enemies, the fear of which drove him to God, or because of God's strength the hope of which drew him to God, *will I wait upon thee,* with a believing dependence upon thee, and confidence in thee. It is our wisdom and duty in times of danger and difficulty to wait upon God; for he is our defence, our high place, in whom we shall be safe. He hopes,

(1.) That God will be to him a God of mercy, ver. 10. *The God of my mercy shall prevent me* with the blessings of his goodness, and the gifts of his mercy; prevent my fears, prevent my prayers, and be better to me than my own expectations. It is very comfortable to us in prayer to eye God, not only as the God of mercy, but as the God of our mercy, the author of all good in us, and the giver of all good to us. Whatever mercy there is in God, it is laid up for us, and is ready to be laid out upon us. Justly doth the psalmist call God's mercy his mercy, for all the blessings of the new covenant are called *the sure mercies of David*, *Isa. lv. 3.* And they are sure to all the seed.

(2.) That he will be to his persecutors a God of vengeance. His expectation of this he expresseth partly by way of prediction, and partly by way of petition, which comes all to one; for his prayer that it might be so, amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so: And so here are several things which he foretells concerning his enemies or observers, that sought occasion against him, and opportunity to do him a mischief; in all which he should see his desire, not a passionate or revengeful desire, but a believing desire upon them, ver. 10.

1. He foresees that God would expose them to scorn, as they had indeed made themselves ridiculous, ver. 8. *They think God doth not hear them, doth not heed them, but thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them* for their folly, to think that he, that planted the ear shall not hear, and thou shalt have not them only, but all other such heathenish people that live without God in the world, in derision. Note, Atheists and persecutors are worthy to be laughed at and had in derision. See *Pfalm ii. Prov. i. 26. Isa. xxxvii. 22.*

2. That God would make them standing monuments of his justice, ver. 11. *Slay them not, let them not be killed outright, lest my people forget.* If the execution be soon done, the impressions of it will not be deep, and therefore will not be durable, but will quickly wear off; swift destructions startle men for the present, but they are soon forgotten; for which reason he prays that this might be gradual, *scatter them by thy power,* and let them carry about with them, in their wanderings, such tokens of God's displeasure as may spread the notice of their punishment to all parts of the country. Thus Cain himself, though a murderer, was not slain, lest the vengeance should be forgotten, but was sentenced to be a fugitive and a vagabond. Note, When we think God's judgments come slowly upon sinners, we must conclude that God has wife and holy ends in the gradual proceedings of his wrath. So scatter them, as that they may never again unite to do mischief, *bring them down, O Lord, our shield.* If God has

undertaken the protection of his people as their shield, he will do abjects humble and abase all those that fight against them.

3. That they might be dealt with according to their deserts, ver. 12. *For the sin of their mouth, even for the words of their lips;* for every word they speak has sin in it, let them for this be taken in their pride, even for their cursing others and themselves, (a sin Saul was subject to, *1 Sam. xiv. 28—41.*) and lying. Note, (1.) There is a great deal of malignity in tongue-sins, more than is commonly thought of. (2.) Cursing, and lying, and speaking proudly, are some of the worst of the sins of the tongue, and that man is truly miserable whom God deals with according to the deserts of these, *making his own tongue to fall on him.*

4. That God would glorify himself as Israel's God and King in their destruction, ver. 13. *Consume them in wrath, consume them, i. e.* follow them with one judgment after another till they be utterly ruined, let them be sensibly but gradually wasted, that they themselves, while they are in the consuming, may know, and that the standers-by may likewise draw this inference from it, *That God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth.* Saul and his party think to rule and carry all before them, but they shall be made to know that there is a Higher than they, that there is one who doth and will over-rule them. The design of God's judgment is to convince men that the Lord reigns, that he fulfils his own counsels, gives law to all the creatures and disposeth all things to his own glory, so that the greatest of men are under his check, and he makes what use he pleases of them. He rules in Jacob, for there he keeps his court, there he is known, and his name is great; but he rules to the ends of the earth, for nations are within the territories of his kingdom. He rules to the ends of the earth, even over those that know him not, but he rules for Jacob, so it may be read; he has an eye to the good of his church in the government of the world: the administration of that government even to the ends of the earth, are for Jacob his servant's sake, and for Israel's his elect, *Isa. xlv. 4.*

5. That he would make their sin their punishment, ver. 14. compare, ver. 6. Their sin was hunting for David to make a prey of him; their punishment should be, that they should be reduced to such extreme poverty, that they should hunt for meat to satisfy their hunger, and should miss of it as they missed of David. Thus they should be, not cut off at once, but scattered, ver. 11. and gradually consumed, ver. 15. they that die by famine die by inches, and feel themselves die, *Lam. iv. 9.* He foretells, that they should be forced to beg their bread from door to door. (1.) That they should do it with the greatest regret and reluctancy imaginable; *to beg they are ashamed* (which makes it the greater punishment to them) and therefore they do it at evening, when it begins to be dark, that they may not be seen; at the time when other beasts of prey creep forth, *Psa. civ. 20.* (2.) That yet they should be very clamorous and loud in their complaints, which would proceed from a great indignation at their condition, which they cannot in the least degree reconcile themselves to; *They shall make a noise like a dog.* When they are in quest of David, they make a noise like an angry dog snarling and barking: now when they are in quest of meat they shall make a noise like a hungry dog howling and wailing. Those that repent of their sins when they are in trouble, *mourn like doves;* those whose hearts are hardened when they are in trouble, make a noise like dogs, *like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord.* See *Ios. vii. 14.* *They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled on their beds for corn and wine.* (3.) That they should meet with little relief, but the hearts of people should be very much hardened towards them; so that they should go round about the city, and wander up and down for meat, ver. 15. and should get nothing but by dint of importunity, according to our marginal reading, *If they be not satisfied they will tarry all night;* so that what people do give them is not with good-will, but only to be rid of them, lest by their continual coming they weary them. (4.) That they should be insatiable, which is the greatest misery of all in a poor condition. *They are greedy dogs; which can never have enough,* *Isa. lvi. 11.* and they grudge if they be not satisfied. A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet doth not grudge, doth not quarrel with providence, nor fret within himself; but those whose God is their belly, if that be not filled, and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent that makes a man unhappy.

2. He expects to praise God; that God's providence would find him matter for praise, and that God's grace would work in him a heart for praise, ver. 16, 17. Observe,

(1.) What he would praise God for. (1.) He would praise his power and his mercy, both should be the subject matter of his song: Power without mercy is to be dreaded; mercy without power is not what a man can expect much benefit from; but God's power by which he is able to help us, and his mercy by which he is inclined to help us, will justify the everlasting praise of all the saints. (2.) He would praise him because he had many a time, and all along found him his defence, and his refuge in the day of trouble. God brings his people into trouble, that they may experience his power and mercy in protecting and sheltering them, and may have occasion to praise him. (3.) He would praise him because he had still a dependence upon him, and a confidence in him, as his strength to support him and carry him on in his duty; his defence to keep him safe from evil, and the God of his mercy to make him happy and easy. He that is all this to us, is certainly worthy of our best affections, praises, and services.

(2.) How he would praise God. (1.) He would sing. As that is a natural expression of joy, so it is an instituted ordinance for the exerting and exciting of holy joy and thankfulness. (2.) He would sing aloud, as one much affected with the glory of God, that was not ashamed to own it, and that desired to affect others with it. He will sing of God's power, but he will sing aloud of his mercy; the consideration of that raises his affections more than any thing else. (3.) He would sing aloud in the morning, when his spirits were most fresh and lively; God's compassions are new every morning, and therefore it is fit to begin the day with his praises. (4.) He would sing unto God, ver. 17. to his honour and glory, and with him in his eye. As we must direct our prayers to God, so to him we must direct our praises and must look up; making melody to the Lord.

P S A L M LX.

After many psalms which David penned in a day of distress, this comes, which was calculated for a day of triumph; it was penned after he was settled in the throne, upon occasion of an illustrious victory which God blessed his forces with over the Syrians and Edomites; it was when David was in the zenith of his prosperity, and the affairs of his kingdom seem to have been in a better posture than ever they were either before or after. See *2 Sam. viii. 3, 13. 1 Chron. xviii. 3—12.* David in prosperity was as devout as David in adversity. In this psalm. (1.) He reflects upon the ill state of the public interests for many years, in which God had been contending with them, ver. 1—3. (2.) He takes notice of the happy turn lately given to their affairs, ver. 4. (3.) He prays for the deliverance of God's Israel from their enemies, ver.



ver. 5. (4.) *He triumphs in hope of their victories over their enemies, and begs of God to carry them on and complete them, ver. 6-12. In singing this psalm we may have an eye both to the acts of the church and to the state of our own souls, both which have their struggles.*

To the chief musician, upon Shushan-eduth Michtam of David, to teach when he strove with Aram-naharaim, and with Aram-zobah when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.

1. **O** GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. 2. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof, for it shaketh. 3. Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. 4. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee: that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah. 5. That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me.

The title gives us an account, (1.) Of the general design of the psalm; it is Michtam, David's jewel, and it is to teach. The Levites must teach it the people, and by it teach them both to trust in God, and to triumph in him; we must in it teach ourselves and one another. In a day of public rejoicing we have need to be taught to direct our joy to God, and to terminate it in him, to give none of that praise to the instruments of our deliverance which is due to him only, and to encourage our hopes with our joys. (2.) Of the particular occasion of it: It was at a time, (1.) When he was in war with the Syrians, and still had a conflict with them, both those of Mesopotamia, and those of Zobah. (2.) When he had gained a great victory over the Edomites by his forces under the command of Joab, who had left twelve thousand of the enemy dead upon the spot. David has an eye to both these concerns in this psalm; he is in care about his strife with the Assyrians, and in reference to that he prays. He is rejoicing in his success against the Edomites, and with reference to that he triumphs with a holy confidence in God, that he would complete the victory. We have our cares at the same time that we have our joys, and they may serve for a balance to each other, that neither may exceed: They may likewise furnish us with matter both for prayer and praise, for both must be laid before God with suitable affections and devotions. If one point be gained, yet in another we are still striving: The Edomites are vanquished, but the Syrians are not: therefore let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as if he had put it off.

In these verses which begin the psalm we have,

1. A melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments, which God had for some years past put the people under. During the reign of Saul, especially in the latter end of it, and during David's struggle with the house of Saul, while he reigned over Judah only, the affairs of the kingdom were much perplexed, and the neighbour nations were vexatious to them. (1.) He complains of hard things which they had seen, i. e. which they had suffered, ver. 3. while the Philistines and other ill neighbours took all advantages against them. God sometimes shews even his own people hard things in this world, that they may not take up their rest in it, but may dwell at ease in him only. (2.) He owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships they had undergone. *Thou hast been displeased by us, displeased against us, ver. 1. and in thy displeasure hast cast us off, and scattered us, ver. 2. and in thy displeasure hast put us out of thy protection, else our enemies could not have prevailed thus against us.* They had never picked us up and made a prey of us, if thou hast not broke the staff of bands, (Zech. xi. 14.) by which we were united, and so scattered us. Whatever our trouble is, and whoever are the instruments of it, we must own the hand of God, his righteousness and in it. (3.) He laments the ill effects and consequences of the miscarriages of the late years. The whole nation was in a confusion; *thou hast made the earth to tremble; or the land.* The generality of the people had dreadful apprehensions of the issue of these things; the good people themselves were in a consternation; *Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment;* we were like men intoxicated and at our wit's end: not knowing how to reconcile the dispensations with God's promises and his relation to his people; we are at a gaze, can do nothing, nor know what we do.

Now this is mentioned here to teach, i. e. for the instruction of the people. When God is turning his hand in our favour, it is good to remember our former calamities. (1.) That we may retain the good impressions they made upon us, and may have them revived. Our souls must still have the affliction and the misery in remembrance, that they may be humbled within us, Lam. iii. 19, 20. (2.) That God's goodness to us in relieving and raising us up, may be more magnified; for it is as life from the dead, so strange, so refreshing. Our calamities serve as soils to our joys. (3.) That we may not be secure, but may always rejoice with trembling, as those that know not how soon we may be returned into the furnace again, which we were lately taken out of, as the silver is when it is not thoroughly refined.

2. A thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope that though things had been long bad, they would now begin to mend, ver. 4. *Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,* (for as bad as the times are, there is a remnant among us that desire to fear thy name, for whom thou hast a tender concern) *that it may be displayed by thee, because of the truth of thy promise, which thou wilt perform;* and to be displayed by them, in defence of truth and equity, Psal. xlv. 4. This banner was David's government, the establishment and enlargement of it over all Israel; the pious Israelites, who feared God, and had a regard to the divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and like the lifting up of a banner to them. (1.) It united them, as soldiers are gathered together to their colours; they that were scattered, ver. 1, divided among themselves, and so weakened and exposed when he was fixed upon the throne coalesced in him. (2.) It animated them, and put life and courage into them, as the soldiers are heartened by the sight of their banner. (3.) It struck a terror upon their enemies; to whom they could now hang out a flag of defiance. Christ, the son of David, is given for an ensign of the people, Isa. xi. 10. for a banner to those that fear God; in him as the center of their unity, they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory and take courage; his love is the banner over them, and in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness; and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

3. An humble petition for seasonable mercy.

(1.) That God would be reconciled to them, though he had been displeased with them. In this displeasure their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin. *O turn thyself to us again, ver.*

1. *smile upon us, and take part with us; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia.*

(2.) That they might be reconciled to one another, though they had been broken and wretchedly divided among themselves; *Heal the breaches of our land, ver. 2.* not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among themselves by our unhappy divisions. Those are breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, and which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can make up and repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace; by which only a shaken shattered kingdom is set to rights, and saved from ruin.

(3.) That thus they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies, ver. 3. *That thy beloved may be delivered, and not made a prey of; save with thy right hand,* with thine own power, and by such instruments as thou art pleased to make the men of thy right hand, and *hear me.* They that fear God are his beloved; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; they are often in distress, but they shall be delivered; God's own right hand shall save them, for they that have his heart have his hand. *Save them and hear me.* Note, God's praying people may take the general deliverances of the church, as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the public, and those blessings be bestowed, besides the share we have with others in the benefit of them, we may each of us say with a peculiar satisfaction, God has therein heard me, and answered me.

6. God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 7. Gilead is mine, and Manassah is mine, Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver. 8. Moab is my washpot, over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. 9. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom? 10. Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? 11. Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man. 12. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

David is here rejoicing in hope and praying in hope; such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in possession as of what they have in prospect, ver. 6. *God hath spoken in his holiness, i. e.* He hath given me his word of promise, has sworn by his holiness, and he will not lie unto David, Psal. lxxxi. 35. therefore I will rejoice and please myself with the hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise. Note, God's word of promise being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

Two things David here rejoiceth in the prospect of.

1. The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God having spoken in his holiness that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand; *I will divide Shechem, a pleasant city in mount Ephraim, and mete out the valley of Succoth, as my own, ver. 7. Gilead is mine, and Manassah is mine,* and both entirely reduced. Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards and his standing forces; Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice, and thus Ephraim would be the strength of his head, and Judah his lawgiver. Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ: *God hath spoken in his holiness,* and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God himself mine; *All is yours for you are Christ's,* 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

The conquering of the neighbour nations that had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David, ver. 8. Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the meanest drudgery; *The Moabites become David's servants,* 2 Sam. viii. 2. Edom shall be made a dunghill to throw old shoes upon; at least David shall take possession of it as his own, which which was signified by *drawing off his shoe over it, Ruth iv. 7.* And as for the Philistines, let them if they dare triumph over him as they had done; he will soon force them to change their note; rather let those that know their own interest triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them, to be brought into subjection to David, and communion with Israel.

But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a strong city, Rabbah (perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out; Edom is not yet subdued. Now (1.) David is here enquiring for help to carry on the war, *Who will bring me into the strong city?* what allies, auxiliaries, can I depend upon to make me master of the enemies' country, and their strongholds; They that have begun a good work, cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection. (2.) He is expecting it from God only; *Wilt not thou, O God?* for thou hast spoken in thine holiness: And wilt not thou be as good as thy word? He takes notice of the frowns of providence they had been under. *Thou hast in appearance cast us off, thou didst not go forth with our armies;* when they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted, that is, because they had forfeited the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly off from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him; and the less he has done for them of late, the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was passed, they hoped in his mercy for what was to come. Though *Thou hast cast us off,* yet thou wilt not contend for ever, thou wilt not always chide; though *thou hast cast us off;* yet thou hast begun to shew mercy, and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun? The son of David in his sufferings seemed to be cast off by his Father, when he cried out, *Why hast thou forsaken me?* And yet even then he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he is gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God his spiritual Israel, through him likewise are more than conquerors: Though sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them in to the strong city at last; *Vincimus in praelio, sed non in bello.* A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that *the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly;* but that *it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.*

2. He prays in hope. His prayer is, *Give us help from trouble,* ver. 11. Even in the day of their triumph, they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is troublesome even to the prevailing side; None therefore can delight in war, but those that love to fish in troubled waters: The help from trouble they pray for is, preservation from those they were at war with. Though now they were conquerors, yet (so uncertain are the issues of war) unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might



might go by the worst; therefore, *Lord, send no help from the sanctuary. Help from trouble, is rest from war: which they prayed for, as those that contend for equity, not for victory, sic querimus pacem.*

The hope with which they support themselves in this prayer, has two things in it. (1.) A diffidence of themselves, and all their creature confidences, *Vain is the help of man*, and then only we are qualified to receive help from God, when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do. (2.) A confidence in God and in his power and promise, *ver. 12. Through God we shall do valiantly*, and so we shall do victoriously; for he it is, and he only that shall tread down our enemies, and shall have the praise of it. Note, 1. Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding, that it must encourage and quicken our endeavours in the way of our duty. Though it is God that performeth all things for us, yet there is something to be done by us. 2. Hope in God is the best principle of true courage: Those that do their duty under his conduct, may afford to do it valiantly; for what need they fear, who have God on their side? 3. It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; it is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution. 4. Though we do never so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for *he it is that shall tread down our enemies*, and not we ourselves. All our victories as well as our valour are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crowns must be cast.

P S A L M LXI.

*David in this psalm, as in many others, begins with a sad heart, but concludes with an air of pleasantness; begins with prayers and tears, but ends with songs of praise. Thus the soul, by being lifted up to God, returns to the enjoyment of itself. It should seem David was driven out and banished when he penned this psalm, whether by Saul or Absalom is uncertain: some think by Absalom, because he calls himself the king, ver. 6. but that refers to the king Messiah. David in this psalm resolves to persevere in his duty, encouraged thereto both by his experience, and by his expectations. (1.) He will call upon God because God had protected him, ver. 1-3. (2.) He will call upon God, because God had provided well for him, ver. 4, 5. (3.) He will praise God, because he had an assurance of the continuance of God's favour to him, ver. 6, 7, 8. So that in singing this psalm, we may find that which is very expressive both of our faith and of our hope, of our prayers and of our praises: and some passages in this psalm are very peculiar.*

¶ To the chief musician upon Neginah.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

**1. HEAR** my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer. 2. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. 3. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. 4. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

In these verses we may observe,

1. David's close adherence and application to God by prayer, in the day of his distress and trouble; whatever comes, *I will cry unto thee*, ver. 2. Not cry to other gods, but to thee only; not fall out with thee because thou afflictest me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee; not speak to thee in a cold or careless manner, but cry to thee with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go except thou blest me. This he will do, (1.) Notwithstanding his distance from the sanctuary, the house of prayer, where he used to attend as in the court of requests. *From the end of the earth*, or of the land, from the most remote and obscure corner of the country, *will I cry unto thee*. Note, Wherever we are, we may have the liberty of access to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace, *undique ad caelos tantundem est via*. Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore I will cry unto thee. Note, That which separates us from our other comforts, should drive us so much the nearer to God the fountain of all comfort. (2.) Notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit; though *my heart is overwhelmed*, it is not so sunk, so burdened, but that it may be lifted up to God in prayer: if it is not capable of being thus raised, it is certainly too much cast down. Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore I will cry unto thee, for by that means it will be supported and relieved. Note, Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. *Is any afflicted? let him pray*, Jam. v. 13. Psal. cii. title.

2. The particular petition he put up to God when his heart was overwhelmed, and he was ready to sink, *Lead me to the rock that is higher than I*; i. e. (1.) To the rock which is too high for me to get up to, unless thou help me to it; Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety, as I can never attain to, but by thy special grace working such a faith in me. (2.) To the rock on the top of which I shall be set further out of the reach of my troubles, and nearer the screen and quiet region, than I can by any power or wisdom of my own. God's power and promise is a rock that is higher than we: This rock is Christ; they are safe that are in him. We cannot get upon this rock, unless God by his power lead us, *I will put thee in the cleft of the rock*, Exod. xxxiii. 22. We should therefore by faith and prayer put ourselves under a divine conduct, that we may be taken under a divine direction.

3. His desire and expectation of an answer of peace; He begs in faith, *ver. 1. Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer*, i. e. Let me have the present comfort of knowing that I am heard, *Psal. xx. 6.* and in due time let me have that which I pray for.

4. The ground of this expectation, and the plea he useth to enforce his petition, *ver. 3. Thou hast been a shelter for me*, I have found in thee a rock higher than I, therefore I trust thou wilt still lead me to that rock. Note, Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they could encourage us to hope that it will not be in vain. *Thou hast been my strong tower, from the enemy*, and thou art as strong as ever, and thy name as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was, *Prov. xviii. 10.*

5. His resolution to continue in the way of duty to God, and dependance on him, *ver. 4. (1.)* The service of God shall be his constant work and business; all those souls make it so, who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower; none but his menial servants have the benefit of his protection; *I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever*. David was now banished from the tabernacle, which was his greatest grievance, but he is assured that

God by his providence would bring him back to his tabernacle, because he had by his grace wrought in him such a kindness for the tabernacle, as that he was resolved to make it his perpetual residence, *Psal. xxvii. 4.* He speaks of abiding in it for ever, because that tabernacle was a type and figure of heaven, *Heb. ix. 8, 9-24.* And those that dwell in God's tabernacle as it is a house of duty, during their short *sojourn* on earth, shall dwell in that tabernacle which is the house of glory during an endless *ever*. (2.) The grace of God and the covenant of grace shall be his constant comfort; *I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings*, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a shelter to them, ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage they have that abide in God's tabernacle, that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

5. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. 6. Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations. 7. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him. 8. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform thy vows.

In these verses we may observe,

1. With what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly, *ver. 5. Thou O God hast heard my vows*, i. e. (1.) The vows themselves which I made, and with which I bound my soul; thou hast taken notice of them: thou hast accepted them because made in sincerity; and been well-pleased with them; thou hast been mindful of them, and put me in mind of them; God put Jacob in mind of his vows, *Gen. xxxi. 13-xxv. 1.* Note, God is a witness to all our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David here, why we should perform our vows, *ver. 8.* For he that hears the vows we made, will make us hear from them if they be not made good. (2.) The prayers that went along with those vows; those thou hast graciously heard and answered; which encouraged him now to pray, *O God, hear my cry*. He that never did say to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain, will not now begin to say so. Thou hast heard my vows, and given a real answer to them; for *thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name*. Note, (1.) There is a peculiar people in the world that fear God's name, that with a holy awe and reverence accept of, and accommodate themselves to, all the discoveries he is pleased to make of himself to the children of men. (2.) There is a heritage peculiar to that peculiar people, present comforts, earnestness of their future bliss. God himself is their inheritance, their portion for ever. The Levites that had God for their inheritance, must take up with him, and not expect a lot like their brethren; so those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain if they have but little of the world. (3.) We need desire no better heritage than that of those which fear God. If God deal with us as he uses to deal with those that love his name, we need not desire to be any better dealt with.

2. With what assurance he looks forward to the continuance of his life, *ver. 6. Thou shalt prolong the king's life*. This may be understood either, (1.) Of himself: if it were penned before he came to the crown, yet being anointed by Samuel, and knowing what God had spoken in his holiness, he could in faith call himself the king, though now persecuted as an outlaw; or perhaps it was penned when Absalom sought to un-king him, and forced him into exile. There were those that aimed to shorten his life, but he trusted to God to prolong his life, which he did to the age of man set by Moses, *viz. seventy years*; which spent in serving his generation according to the will of God, (*Mos. xiii. 36.*) might be reckoned as many generations, because many generations would be the better for him. His resolution was to abide in God's tabernacle for ever, *ver. 4.* in a way of duty; and now his hope is, that he shall abide before God for ever in a way of comfort. Those abide to good purpose in this world, that abide before God, i. e. that serve him and walk in his fear; and they that do so shall abide before him for ever. He speaks of himself in the third person, because this psalm was delivered to the chief musician for the use of the church, and he would have the people in singing of it to be encouraged with an assurance, that notwithstanding the malice of his enemies, their king, as they wished, should live for ever. Or, (2.) Of the Messiah, the king of whom he was a type; it was a comfort to David to think, whatever became of him, the years of the Lord's Anointed should be as many generations, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The mediator shall abide before God for ever, for he always appears in the presence of God for us, and ever lives making intercession: and because he lives, we shall live also.

3. With what importunity he begs of God to take him and keep him always under his protection; *O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him*. God's promises, and our faith in them, are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer. David is sure that God will prolong his life, and therefore prays that he would preserve it. Not that he would prepare him a strong life-guard, or a well fortified castle; but that he would prepare mercy and truth for his preservation; i. e. that God's goodness would provide for his safety according to the promise. We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth. This may be applied to the Messiah; let him be sent in the fulness of time in *performance of the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham*, Micah vii. 20. Luke i. 72, 73.

4. With what cheerfulness he vows the grateful returns of duty to God, *ver. 8. So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever*. Note, God's preserving us calls upon us to praise him; and therefore we should desire to live that we may praise him; *let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*. We must make praising God the work of our time, even to the last, as long as our lives are prolonged, we must continue praising God; and then it shall be made the work of our eternity, and we shall be praising him for ever. That I may daily perform my vows. His praising God was itself the performance of his vows, and it disposed his heart to the performance of his vows in other instances. Note, 1. The vows we have made we must conscientiously perform. 2. Praising God and paying our vows to him, must be our constant daily work; every day we must be doing something towards it, because it is all but little in comparison with what is due, because we daily receive fresh mercies, and because if we think much to do it daily, we cannot expect to be doing it eternally.

P S A L M LXII.

*This psalm has nothing in it directly either of prayer or praise; nor doth it appear upon what occasion it was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion, whether mournful or joyful. But in it, (1.) David,*

*with*



with a great deal of pleasure professeth his own confidence in God and dependance upon him, and encouraged himself to continue waiting on him. ver. 1-7. (2.) With a great deal of earnestness he excites and encourageth others to trust in God likewise, and not in any creature, ver. 8-12. And in singing it, we should stir up ourselves to wait on God.

To the chief musician, to Jeduthun.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **T**RULY my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. 2. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. 3. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence. 4. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency, they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah. 5. My soul wait thou only upon God! for my expectation is from him. 6. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence: I shall not be moved. 7. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God.

In these verses we have,

1. David's profession of dependance upon God, and upon him only for all good, ver. 1. *Truly my soul waiteth upon God.* Nevertheless, (so some) or however it be whatever difficulties or dangers I may meet with, though God frown upon me, and I meet with discouragements in my attendance on him, yet still my soul waiteth upon God; or is silent to God, as the word is: faith nothing against what he doth, but quietly expects what he will do. We are in the way both of duty and comfort when our souls wait upon God, i. e. when we cheerfully refer ourselves, and the disposal of all our affairs, to his will and wisdom, when we acquiesce to and accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence, and patiently expect a doubtful event with an entire satisfaction in his righteousness and goodness, however it be. *Is not my soul subject to God?* So the LXX. So it is certainly, so it ought to be; our wills must be melted into his will. My soul hath respect to God, for from him cometh my salvation. He doubts not but his salvation will come, though now he was threatened and in danger? and he expects it to come from God, and from him only; for *in vain is it hoped for from hills and mountains*, Jer. iii. 23. Psalm cxxi. 1, 2. From him I know it will come, therefore on him will I patiently wait till it doth come, for his time is the best time. We may apply it to our eternal salvation, which is called the *salvation of God*, Psal. i. 23. from him that comes; he prepared it for us, he prepares us for it, and preserves us to it, and therefore let our souls wait on him, to be conducted through this world to that eternal salvation, in such a way as he thinks fit.

2. The ground and reason of this dependance, ver. 2. *He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence.* (1.) He hath been so many a time, in him I have found shelter, and strength, and succour; he hath by his grace supported me, and borne me up under my troubles, and by his providence defended me from the insults of my enemies, and delivered me out of the troubles into which I was plunged: and therefore *I trust he will deliver me*, 2 Cor. i. 10. (2.) He only can be my rock and my salvation; creatures are insufficient, they are nothing without him, and therefore I will look above them to him. (3.) He hath by covenant undertaken to be so. Even he that is the rock of ages is my rock; that is the God of salvation, is my salvation; that is the most High, is my high place; and therefore I have all the reason in the world to confide in him.

3. The improvement he makes of his confidence in God.

1. Trusting in God his heart is fixed. If God is my strength and mighty deliverer, *I shall not be greatly moved*, i. e. I shall not be undone and ruined; I may be shocked, but I shall not be sunk. Or, I shall not be much disturbed and disquieted in my own breast. I may be put into some fright, but I shall not be afraid with any amazement, nor so as to be put out of the possession of my soul. I may be perplexed but not in despair, 2 Cor. iv. 8. This hope in God will be an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast.

2. His enemies are slighted, and all their attempts against him looked upon with contempt, ver. 3, 4. If God be for us, we need not fear what man can do against us, though never so mighty and malicious. He here, (1.) Gives a character of his enemies. They imagine mischief, design it, with a great deal of the serpent's venom, and contrive it with a great deal of the serpent's subtilty, and this against a man, one of their own kind, against one single man, that is not an equal match for them, for they are many, they continued their malicious persecution, though providence had often defeated their mischievous designs; How long will ye do it? Will ye never be convinced of your error? Will your malice never have spent itself? They are unanimous in their consultations to cast an excellent man down from his excellency; to draw an honest man from his integrity, to entangle him in sin, which is the only thing that can effectually cast us down from our excellency; to thrust a man whom God has exalted, down from his dignity, and so to fight against God. Envy was at the bottom of their malice; they were grieved at David's advancement, and therefore plotted, by diminishing his character, and blackening that, which was casting him down from his excellency, to balk his preferment. In order to this, they bely him, and love to hear such ill characters given of him, and such ill reports raised and spread concerning him, as they themselves know to be false; they delight in lies. And as they make no conscience of lying concerning him to do him a mischief, so they make no conscience of lying to him, to conceal the mischief they design, and accomplish it the more effectually; they bless with their mouth, they compliment David to his face, but they curse inwardly; i. e. in their hearts they wish him all mischief, and privately they are plotting against him; and in their cabals carrying on some ill design or other, by which they hope to ruin him; it is dangerous putting our trust in men who are thus false, but God is faithful. (2.) He reads their doom, pronounceth a sentence of death upon them, not as a king, but as a prophet, *ye shall be slain all of you*, by the righteous judgments of God: Saul and his servants were slain by the Philistines on mount Gilboa, according to this prediction; whoever seeks the ruin of God's chosen, are but preparing ruin for themselves. God's church is built upon a rock which will stand, but they that fight against it, and its patrons and protectors, shall be as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, which having a rotten foundation, sinks with its own weight,

falls of a sudden, and buries those in the ruins of it that put themselves under the shadow and shelter of it. David having put his confidence in God, thus foresees the overthrow of his enemies, and in effect set them at defiance, and bids them do their worst.

3. He is himself encouraged to continue waiting upon God, ver. 5, 6, 7. *My soul wait thou only upon God.* Note: The good we do we should stir up ourselves to continue doing, and to do, yet more and more, as those that have through grace experienced the comfort and benefit of it. We have found it good to wait upon God, and therefore should charge our souls, and even charm them into such a constant dependance upon him, as may make us always easy. He had said, ver. 1. *From him cometh my salvation*; he saith, ver. 5. *My expectation is from him.* His salvation was the principal matter of his expectation; let him have that from God, and he expects no more. His salvation being from God, all his other expectations are from him; If God will save my soul, as to every thing else let him do what he pleaseth with me, and I will acquiesce in his disposals, knowing they shall all turn to my salvation, Phil. i. 19. He repeats, ver. 6. what he had said concerning God, ver. 2. as one that was not only assured of it, but greatly well pleased with it, and dwelt much upon it in his thoughts. *He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence*, I know he is; but there he adds, *I shall not be greatly moved*, here I shall not be moved at all. Note, Faith grows by being exercised, and the more it is acted the more active it is, *crefcit eundo*. The more we meditate upon God's attributes and promises, and our own experience, the more ground we get of our fears, which, like Haman, when they begin to fall, shall fall before us, and we shall be kept in perfect peace, Isa. xxvi. 3. And as David's faith in God advanceth to an unshaken staydness, so his joy in God improves itself into an holy triumph, ver. 7. *In God is my salvation and my glory.* Where our salvation is, there our glory is; for what is our salvation, but the glory to be revealed; the eternal weight of glory; and there our glorying must be; In God let us boast all the day long. *The rock of my strength*, i. e. my strong rock, on which I build my hopes and stay myself, and my refuge to which I flee for shelter when I am pursued, is in God, and in him only. I have no other to flee to, no other to trust to, the more I think of it, the better satisfied I am in the choice I have made. Thus doth he *delight himself in the Lord, and then ride upon the high places of the earth*, Isa. lviii. 14.

8. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah. 9. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. 10. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. 11. God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God. 12. Also unto thee O Lord, belongeth mercy; for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Here we have David's exhortation to others to trust in God, to wait upon him as he had done: Those that have found the comfort of the ways of God themselves, will invite others into those ways; there is enough in God for all the saints to draw from, and we shall have never the less for others sharing with us.

1. He counsels all to wait upon God, as he did, ver. 8. Observe, (1.) To whom he gives this good counsel, *Ye people*, i. e. All people; all shall be welcome to trust in God, for he is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, Psalm lxxv. 5. *ye people of the house of Israel*, to the Chaldees. They are especially engaged and invited to trust in God, for he is the God of Israel, and should not a people seek unto their God! (2.) What the good counsel is which he gives. 1. To confide in God; trust in him: deal with him, and be willing to deal upon trust; depend upon him to perform all things for you, upon his wisdom and goodness, his power and promise, his providence and grace. Do this at all times, i. e. We must have an habitual confidence in God always, must live a life of dependance upon him; must so trust in him at all times, as not at any time to put that confidence in ourselves, or in any creature, which is to be put in him only. And we must have an actual confidence in God upon all occasions; trust in him upon every emergency, to guide us when we are in doubt; to protect us when we are in danger; to supply us when we are in want; to strengthen us for every good word and work. 2. To converse with God, *pour out your hearts before him*; the expression seems to allude to the pouring out of the drink-offerings before the Lord. When we make a penitent confession of sin, our hearts are therein poured out before God, 1 Sam. vii. 31. But here it is meant of prayer, which if it be as it should be, is the pouring out of the heart before God. We must lay our grievances before him, offer up our desires to him with all humble freedom, and then entirely refer ourselves to his disposal, patiently submitting our wills to his: This is pouring out of our hearts. (3.) What encouragement he gives us to take this good counsel. *God is a refuge for us*; not only my refuge, ver. 7. but a refuge for us all, even as many as will flee to him, and take shelter in him.

2. He cautions us to take heed of misplacing our confidence, in which as much as in any thing the heart is deceitful, Jer. xvii. 5-9. They that trust in God truly, ver. 1. will trust in him only, ver. 5.

(1.) Let us not trust in the men of this world, for they are broken reeds, ver. 9. *Surely men of low degree are vanity*, utterly unable to help us, and *men of high degree are a lie*, that will deceive us if we trust to them. Men of low degree, one would think, might be relied on for their multitude and number, their bodily strength and service; and men of high degree for their wisdom, power and influence; but they are neither to be depended on; nay of the two, men of high degree are under the worse character; for they are a lie, which notes not only vanity, but iniquity. We are not so apt to depend upon men of low degree, as upon the king and the captain of the host, who by the figure they make, tempt us to trust in them, and so when they fail us prove a lie. But lay them in the balance, the balance of the scripture, or rather make trial of them, see how they will prove, whether they will answer your expectations from them or no, and you will write Tekel upon them, they are alike lighter than vanity; there is no depending upon their wisdom, to advise us, their power to act for us; upon their good will to us, no, nor upon their promises in comparison with God, nor otherwise than in subordination to him.

(2.) Let us not trust in the wealth of this world, let not that be made our strong city, ver. 10. *Trust not in oppression*, i. e. not in riches got by fraud and violence; because where there is a great deal, it is commonly got by indirect scraping or saving; our Saviour calls it the *mummon*



of unrighteousness, Luke xvi. 9, or not in the art of getting riches. Think not that either because you have got abundance, or are in the way of getting, that therefore you are safe enough; for this is becoming vain in robbery, i. e. cheating yourselves while you think to cheat others. He that trusted in the abundance of his riches, strengthened himself in his wickedness, Psalm lii. 7. but at his end he will be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11. Let none be so stupid as to think of supporting themselves in their sins, much less of supporting themselves in this sin. Nay, because it is hard to have riches, and not to trust to them, if they increase, though by lawful and honest means; we must take heed lest we let out our affections inordinately towards them; *set not your heart upon them*, i. e. be not eager for them, do not take a complacency in them as the rest of your souls, not put a confidence in them as your portion, be not over solicitous about them, do not value yourselves nor others by them; make not the wealth of the world your chief good and highest end; in short do not make an idol of it. This we are most in danger of doing when they increase; when the grounds of the rich man brought forth plentifully, then he said to his soul *Take thine ease*, in these things, Luke xii. 19. It is a smiling world that is, most likely to draw the heart away from God on whom only it should be set.

3. He gives a very good reason why we should make God our confidence, because he is a God of infinite power, mercy and righteousness, ver. 11, 12. This he himself was well-assured of, and would have us be assured of it. *God had spoken once, twice I heard this*, i. e. (1.) God had spoken it, and I have heard it, once, yea, twice. He hath spoken it, and I have heard it by the light of reason, which easily infers it from the nature of the infinitely perfect Being, and from his works both of creation and providence. He has spoken it, and I have heard once, yea twice, that is many a time, by the events that have been concerning me in particular: And by the light of revelation, by dreams and visions, Job iv. 15. by the glorious manifestation of himself upon mount Sinai, to which some think it doth especially refer, and by the written word. God has often told us what a great and good God he is, and we ought as often to take notice of what he has told us. Or, (2.) Though God spoke it but once, I heard it twice; heard it diligently, not only with my outward ears, but with my soul and mind. To some God speaks twice, and they will not hear once; but to others he speaks but once, and they hear twice. Compare Job xxiii. 14.

Now what is it which is thus spoken and thus heard?

1. That the God with whom we have to do is infinite in power. Power belongs to God, he is almighty, and can do every thing; with him nothing is impossible: All the powers of all the creatures are derived from him, and depend upon him, and are used by him as he pleaseth. His is the power, and to him we must ascribe it. This is a good reason why we should trust in him at all times, and live in a constant dependence upon him; for he is able to do all that for us which we trust in him for.

2. That he is a God of infinite goodness; here he turns his speech to God himself, as being desirous to give him the glory of his goodness, which is his glory: *Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy*. God is not only the greatest but the best of Beings. Mercy is with him, Psalm cxxx. 4—7. He is merciful in a way peculiar to himself, he is the *Father of mercies*, 2 Cor. i. 3. This is a further reason why we should trust in him, and answer the objections of our sinfulness and unworthiness; though we deserve nothing but his wrath, yet we may hope for all good from his mercy which is over all his works.

3. That he never did nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; *For thou renderest to every man according to his work*. Though he doth not always do this visibly in this world, yet ye will do it in the day of recompence. No service done him shall go unrewarded, nor any affront given him unpunished, unless it be repented of. By this it appears that power and mercy belong to him: If he were not a God of power, there are sinners that would be too big to be punished. And if he were not a God of mercy, there are services that would be too worthless to be rewarded. This seems especially to speak the justice of God in judging upon appeals made to him by wronged innocency; he will be sure to judge according to truth, in righting the injured, and revenging them on those that have been injurious to them, 1 Kings viii. 32. Let those therefore that are wronged commit their cause to him, and trust to him to plead it.

## P S A L M LXIII.

This psalm has in it as much warmth and lively devotion as any of David's psalms in so little compass. As the sweetest of Paul's epistles were those that bore date out of a prison; so some of the sweetest of David's psalms, were those that were penned as this was in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment was, the want of public ordinances; these he here longs to be restored to the enjoyment of; and the present want did but whet his appetite. Yet it is not the ordinances, but the God of the ordinances, that his heart is upon. And here we have, (1.) His desire towards God, ver. 1, 2. (2.) His esteem of God, ver. 3, 4. (3.) His satisfaction in God, ver. 5. (4.) His secret communion with God ver. 6. (5.) His joyful dependence upon God, ver. 7, 8. (6.) His holy triumph in God over his enemies, and in the assurance of his own safety, ver. 9, 10, 11. A devout and pious soul has little need of direction how to sing this psalm, so naturally doth it speak its own genuine language: and an un sanctified soul, that is unacquainted and unaffected with divine things, is scarce capable of singing it with understanding.

¶ A psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

1. **O** GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: 2. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

The title tells us when this psalm was penned, when David was in the wilderness of Judah, that is in the forest of Hareth, 1 Sam. xxii. 5. Or, in the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Sam. xxiii. 15. (1.) Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land, and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses, places less fruitful, and less inhabited than other places. It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven: there it is all city, all paradise, and no desert ground: *The wilderness there shall blossom as the rose*, (2.) The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in the wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting, wandering and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves. (3.) All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even when it is our duty

and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank God it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.

David in these verses stirs up himself to take hold of God.

1. By a lively active faith, *O God, thou art my God*. Note, In all our addresses to God we must eye him as God and our God. And this will be our comfort in a wilderness state. We must acknowledge that God is that we speak to one that really exists, and is present with us when we say, *O God*, which is a serious word, pity it should ever be used as a by-word; And we must own his authority over us, and propriety in us, and our relation to him, *Thou art my God*, mine by creation, and therefore my rightful owner and ruler, mine by covenant and my own consent. We must speak it with the greatest pleasure to ourselves, and thankfulness to God, as those that are resolved to abide by it, *O God, thou art my God*.

2. By pious and devout affections, pursuant to the choice he had made of God, and the covenant he had made with him.

1. He resolves to seek God, and his favour and grace. Thou art my God, and therefore, I will seek thee; *for should not a people seek unto their God?* Isa. viii. 20. We must seek him, i. e. we must covet his favour as our chief good, and consult his glory as our highest end; we must seek acquaintance with him by his word, and seek mercy from him by prayer. We must seek him, (1.) Early, i. e. with the utmost care, as those that are afraid of missing him; we must begin our days with him, begin every day with him; *early will I seek thee*. (2.) Earnestly; my soul thirsteth for thee, and my flesh longeth for thee, i. e. my whole man is affected with this pursuit, here in a dry and thirsty land. Observe, (1.) His complaint in the want of God's favourable presence. He was in a dry and thirsty land; so he reckoned it, not so much because it was a wilderness, as because it was a distance from the ark, from the word and sacraments. This world is a weary land, so the word is; it is so to the worldly that have their portion in it, it will yield them no true satisfaction! it is so to the godly that have their passage through it, it is a valley of Baca, they can promise themselves little from it. (2.) His importunity for that presence of God, my soul thirsteth, longeth for thee. His want quickened his desires, which were very intense, he thirsted as the hunted hart for the water-brooks, he would take up with nothing short of it. And they were very impatient, he longed, he languished, till he should be restored to the liberty of God's ordinances. Note, Gracious souls look down upon the world with a holy disdain, and look up to God with a holy desire.

He longs to enjoy God: What is it he doth so passionately wish for? What is his petition, and what is his request? it is this, ver. 2. *To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary*. That is, (1.) To see it here in this wilderness, as I have seen it in the tabernacle, to see it in secret, as I have seen it in the solemn assembly. Note, When we want the benefit of public ordinances, we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements, that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary. Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone, we may have the Father with us, and that is enough. (2.) To see it again in the sanctuary, as I have formerly seen it there. He longs to be brought out of this wilderness, not that he might see his friends again, and be restored to the pleasures and gaieties of the court, but that he might have access to the sanctuary; not to see the priests there, and the ceremony of the worship, but to see thy power and glory, i. e. thy glorious power or thy powerful glory, which is put for all God's attributes and perfections, that I may increase my acquaintance with them, and have the agreeable impressions of them made upon my heart. So to behold the glory of the Lord, as to be changed into the same image, 2 Cor. iii. 18. That I may see thy power and glory. He doth not say, as I have seen them, but as I have seen thee. We cannot see the essence of God, but we see him, in seeing by faith his attributes and perfections. These fights David here pleaseth himself with the remembrance of; those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God, he loved to think them over again: These he lamented the loss of, and longed to be restored to. Note, That which has been the delight, and is the desire of gracious souls in their attendance on solemn ordinances, is to see God and his power, and glory in them.

3. Because thy loving kindness is better than life: my lips shall praise thee. 4. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. 5. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: 6. When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.

How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praise and thanksgivings! after two verses that speak his desire in seeking God, here are some that speak his joy and satisfaction in having found him. Faithful prayers may presently be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault. Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord, Psalm cv. 3. and let them praise him for working those desires in them, and giving them assurance that he will satisfy them. David was in a wilderness, and yet had his heart much enlarged in blessing God. Even in affliction we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. Observe,

1. What David will praise God for, ver. 3. *Because thy loving kindness is better than life*, than lives; life and all the comforts of life; life in its best estate, long life and prosperity. God's loving kindness is in itself, and in the accounts of all the saints, better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, Psalm xxx. 5. It is better a thousand times to die in God's favour than to live under his wrath. David in the wilderness, finds by comfortable experience that God's loving kindness is better than life; and therefore, saith he, my lips shall praise thee. Note, Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour, ought to have them enlarged in his praises. A great deal of reason we have to bless God we have better provisions and better possessions than the wealth of this world can afford us. And that in the service of God, and in communion with him, we have better employments and better enjoyments than we can have in the business and converse of this world.

2. How we will praise God, and how long, ver. 4. He resolves to live a life of thankfulness to God, and dependence on him. Observe, (1.) His manner of blessing God: *Thus will I bless thee*: Thus, as I have now begun; the present devout affections shall not pass away like the morning cloud, but shine more and more like the morning sun. Or thus, i. e. I will bless thee with the same earnestness and fervency with which I have prayed to thee. (2.) His continuance and perseverance therein; *I will bless thee while I live*. Note, Praising God must be the work of our whole lives; we must always retain a grateful sense of his former favours, and repeat our



thanksgiving days for them; we must every day give thanks to him for the benefits we receive as well as for the burdens. We must in every thing give thanks, as not being without a conscience of this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time. Whatever days we live to see, how dark and cloudy soever, though the days come of which we say we have no pleasure in them; yet every day must be a thanksgiving day, even to our dying day. In this work we must spend our time, because in this work we hope to spend a blessed eternity. (8.) His constant regard to God upon all occasions, which he calls upon his praises of him: *I will lift up my hands in thy name.* We must have an eye to God's name, *i. e.* to all that by which he has made himself known, in all our prayers and praises, which we are taught to begin with, *Blessed be thy name, and to conclude with, Thine is the glory.* This we must have an eye to in our works and warfare; we must lift up our hearts to our duty, and against our spiritual enemies in God's name, *i. e.* in the strength of his spirit and grace, *Psalm lxxi. 16. Tech. x. 12.* We must make all our vows in God's name, to him we must engage ourselves, and as a dependence upon his grace; and when we lift up the hands that have been in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name, from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted: *In thee do we live all the day long.*

3. With what pleasure and delight he would praise God, *ver. 5. (1.)* With inward complacency. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.* Not only as with bread, which is nourishing, but as with marrow, which is pleasant and delicious, *Isa. xxv. 6.* David hopes he shall return again to the enjoyment of God's ordinances, and then he shall thus be satisfied, and the more for his having been for a time under restraint. Or if not yet in God's loving kindness, and in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied. Note, There is that in a gracious God, and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a soul, *Psalm xxxiv. 8. lxx. 4.* And there is that in a gracious soul, which takes abundant satisfaction in God, and communion with him. The saints have a contentment with God, they desire no more than his favour to make them happy; and they have a transcendent complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are tasteless and without relish; as puddle-water in comparison with the wine of this consolation. (2.) With outward expressions of this satisfaction; he will praise God with joyful lips. He will praise him, (1.) Openly; his mouth and lips shall praise God. When with the heart man believeth, and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both to the glory of God; *not that the performances of the mouth are accepted without the heart, Matt. xv. 8.* But out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak, *Psalm xlv. 1.* both for the exciting of our own devout affections, and for the edification of others. (2.) Cheerfully: We must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to that and other duties of religion with great cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God with a holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

4. How he would entertain himself with the thoughts of God when he was most retired, *ver. 6. I praise thee, when I remember thee upon my bed.* We must praise God upon every remembrance of him. Now David was shut out from public ordinances, he abounded the more in secret communion with God, and so did something towards making up his loss. Observe here, (1.) How David employed himself in thinking of God. God was in all his thoughts, which is the reverse of the wicked man's character, *Psalm x. 4.* The thoughts of God were ready to him; I remember thee, *i. e.* when I go to think, I find thee at my right hand present to my mind. This subject should first offer itself, as that which we cannot forget or overlook, and they were fixed in him; *I meditate on thee.* Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind.

(2.) When David employed himself thus; *Upon his bed,* and in the night-watches. David was now wandering and unsettled, but wherever he came he brought his religion along with him. Upon my bed (so some). Being hunted by Saul, he seldom lay two nights together in the same bed; but wherever he lay, if, as Jacob, upon the cold ground, and with a stone for his pillow, yet good thoughts of God lay down with him. David was so full of business all day, shifting for his own safety, that he had scarce leisure to apply himself solemnly to religious exercises, and therefore rather than want time for them, he denied himself his necessary sleep. He was now in continual peril of his life, so that we may suppose care and fear many a time held his eyes waking, and gave him wearisome nights; but then he entertained and comforted himself with thoughts of God. Sometimes we find David in tears upon his bed, *Psalm vi. 6.* but thus he wiped away his tears. When sleep departeth from our eyes through pain or sickness of body, or any disturbance in the mind, our souls by remembering God may be at ease and repose themselves. Perhaps an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done, see *Psalm xvi. 7—xvii. 3—iv. 4—cxix. 62.* There were night watches kept in the tabernacle for praising God, *Psalm cxxxiv. 1.* which it is probable David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites in: but now he could not keep pace with them, he kept time with them, and withed himself among them.

7. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. 8. My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me. 9. But those that seek my soul to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. 10. They shall fall by the sword, they shall be a portion for foxes. 11. But the king shall rejoice in God, every one that sweareth by him shall glory; but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped,

David having expressed his desires towards God, and his praises of him, here speaks his confidence in him, and his joyful expectations from him, *ver. 7. In the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice;* alluding either to the wings of the cherubims stretched out over the ark of the covenant, between which God is said to dwell. I will rejoice in thine oracles, and in covenant and communion with thee; or to the wings of a fowl, under which the helpless young ones have shelter, as the eagle's young ones, *Exod. xix. 4. Deut. xxxii. 11.* which speaks the divine power; and the young ones of the common hen, *Matt. xxiii. 37.* which speaks more of divine tenderness: It is a phrase often used in the psalms, *Psalm xvii. 8—xxxvi. 7—lxvii. 1—lxi. 4—xc. 4.* and no where else in this sense, except *Ruth ii. 12.* where Ruth when she became a proselyte, is said to trust under the wings of the God of Israel. It is our duty to rejoice in the shadow of God's wings, which notes our recourse to him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens when they are cold and frightened run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It intimates also our reliance upon him as able and ready to help us, and our

refreshment and satisfaction in his care and protection. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil.

Now let us see further,

1. What were the supports and encouragements of David's confidence in God. Two things were as props to that hope, which the word of God was the only foundation of.

(1.) His former experiences of God's power in relieving him: *because thou hast been my help,* when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore I will still rejoice in thy salvation, will trust in thee for the future, and will do it with delight and holy joy: Thou hast been not only my helper, but my help, for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us, but by him. Here we may set up our Ebenezer, saying, *hitherto the Lord has helped me,* and must therefore resolve that we will never desert him, never distrust him, nor ever droop in our walking with him.

(2.) The present sense he had of God's grace carrying him on in these pursuits, *ver. 8. My soul follows hard after thee,* which speaks a very earnest desire, and a serious vigorous endeavour to keep up communion with God: if we cannot always have God in our embraces, yet we must always have him in our eye, reaching forth towards him as our prize, *Phil. iii. 11.* To press hard after God, is to follow him close, as those that are afraid of losing the sight of him, and to follow him fast, as those that long to be with him. This David did, and he owes to the glory of God, *thy right hand upholdeth me.* God upholds him, (1.) Under his afflictions, that he might not sink under them; *underneath are the everlasting arms.* (2.) In his devotions God upheld him in his holy desires and pursuits, that he might not grow weary in well-doing. Those that follow hard after God would soon fail and give off, if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us in the pursuit of him, quickens our good affections, and comforts us while we have not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of. It is by the power of God, that is his right hand, that we are kept from falling. Now this was a great encouragement to the psalmist to hope, that he would in due time give him that which he so earnestly desired, because he had by his grace wrought in him those desires and kept them up.

2. What it was that David triumphed in the hopes of.

1. That his enemies should be ruined, *ver. 9, 10.* There were those that sought his soul to destroy it, not only his life which they struck at, both to prevent his coming to the crown, and because they envied and hated him for his wisdom, piety, and usefulness; but his soul, they sought to destroy that, by banishing him from God's ordinances, which are the nourishment and support of the soul; and so doing what they could to starve it, and by sending him to serve other gods, and so doing what they could to poison it, *1 Sam. xxvi. 19.* But he foresees and foretells, (1.) That they shall go into the lower parts of the earth; to the grave; to hell; their enmity to David would be their death and their damnation; their ruin, their eternal ruin. (2.) That they shall fall by the sword; by the sword of God's wrath and his justice; by the sword of man, *Job xix. 28, 29.* They shall die a violent death, *Rev. xiii. 10.* This was fulfilled in Saul, he fell by the sword, his own sword; David foretold this, yet he would not execute it when it was in the power of his hand, once and again, for precepts not prophecies are our rule. (3.) That they shall be a portion for foxes either their dead bodies shall be a prey to ravenous beasts; Saul lay a good while unburied; or their houses and estates shall be a habitation for wild beasts, *Isa. xxxiv. 14.* Such as this will be the doom of Christ's enemies, that oppose his kingdom and interest in the world; *bring them forth and slay them before me,* *Luke xix. 27.*

2. That he himself should gain his point at last, *ver. 11.* That he should be advanced to the throne to which he had been anointed: *The king shall rejoice in God.* (1.) He calls himself the king, because he knew himself to be so in the divine purpose and designation; thus Paul while yet in the conflict, writes himself *more than a conqueror,* *Rom. viii. 37.* Believers are made kings, though they are not to have the dominion till the morning of the resurrection. (2.) He doubts not but that though he was now sowing in tears, yet he should reap in joy. *The king shall rejoice.* (3.) He resolves to make God the alpha and omega of all his joys; he shall rejoice in God. Now this is applicable to the glories and joys of the exalted Redeemer. Messiah the prince shall rejoice in God; he is already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be completed at his second coming.

Two things would be the good effect of his advancement.

1. It would be the consolation of his friends. Every one that swears to him, *i. e.* to David, that comes into his interest, and takes an oath of allegiance to him, shall glory in his success: or that swears by him, *i. e.* by the blessed name of God, and not by an idol, *Deut. vi. 13.* And then it means all good people that make a sincere and open profession of God's name: They shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement; *They that fear thee will be glad when they see me.* They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in its victory at last. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.*

2. It would be the confusion of his enemies. *The mouth of them that speak lies, of Saul and Doeg, and others that misrepresented David and insulted over him, as if his cause was desperate, shall be quite stopped; they shall not have one word more to say against him, but will be for ever silenced and shamed.* Apply this to Christ's enemies; those that speak lies to him, as all hypocrites do, that tell him they love him, but their hearts are not with him; their mouths shall be stopped with that word, *I know you not whence you are,* they shall be for ever speechless, *Matt. xxii. 12.* Those that speak lies against him, who pervert the right ways of the Lord, and speak ill of his holy religion, their mouths will be stopped too, in that day when the Lord shall come to reckon for all the hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Christ's second coming will be the everlasting triumph of all his faithful friends and followers, who may therefore now triumph in the believing hopes of it.

P S A L M LXIV.

This whole psalm has reference to David's enemies, persecutors and slanderers: many such there were, and a great deal of trouble they gave him almost all his days, so that we not guess at any particular occasions of penning this psalm: (1.) He prays to God to preserve him from their malicious designs against him, *ver. 1, 2.* (2.) He gives a very ill character of them, as men marked for ruin by their own wickedness, *ver. 3—6.* (3.) By the spirit of prophecy he foretells their destruction, which would redound to the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people, *ver. 7—10.* In singing this psalm we must observe the effect of the old enmity that is in the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent; and assure ourselves that the serpent's head will be broken at last to the honour and joy of the holy seed.



¶ To the chief Musician.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1. **H**EAR my voice, O God, in my prayer; preserve my life from fear of the enemy. 2. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: 3. Who vent their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: 4. That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. 5. They encourage themselves in an evil manner: they commune of laying snares privily, they say, Who shall see them? 6. They search out iniquities, they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.

David in these verses puts in before God a representation of his own danger, and of his enemies character to enforce his petition that God would protect him, and punish them.

1. He earnestly begs to God to preserve him, *ver. 1, 2. Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer, i. e. grant me the thing I pray for: And this is it, Lord, preserve my life for fear of the enemy, i. e. from the enemy that I am in fear of.* He makes request for his life, which is in a particular manner dear to him, because he knows it is designed to be very serviceable to God and his generation. When his life is struck at, it cannot be thought he should altogether hold his peace, allude to *Esth. vii. 2-4.* And if he plead his fear of the enemy, it is no disparagement to his courage; his father Jacob, that prince with God, did so before him, *Gen. xxxii. 11. Deliver me from the hand of Esau, for I fear him: Preserve my life from fear, i. e. not only from the thing itself which I fear, but from the disquieting fear of it; and this is in effect the preservation of the life, for fear has torment: particularly the fear of death by reason of which some are all their lifetime subject to bondage.* He prays, *hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, i. e. from the mischief which they secretly consult among themselves to do against me, and from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity, who join forces as they join counsels to do me a mischief.* Observe, The secret counsels end in an insurrection; treasonable practices begin in treasonable confederacies and conspiracies. Hide me from them, that they may not find me, that they may not reach me. Let me be safe under thy protection.

2. He complains of the great malice and wickedness of his enemies. Lord, hide me from them, for they are the work of men, not fit to be connived at? they are dangerous men, that will stick at nothing, so that I am undone, if thou do not take my part.

1. They are very spiteful in their calumnies and reproaches; *ver. 3, 4.* They are described as military men, with their sword and bow, archers that take aim exactly, secretly and suddenly shoot at the harmless bird, that apprehends not herself in any danger. But, (1.) Their tongues are their swords, flaming swords, two-edged swords, drawn swords, drawn in anger, with which they cut and wound and kill the good name of their neighbour. The tongue is a little member, but, like the sword, it boasts great things, *James iii. 5.* It is a dangerous weapon. (2.) Bitter words are their arrows, Scurrilous reflections, opprobrious nicknames, false representations, slanders and calumnies, the fiery darts of the wicked one, set on fire of hell. For these their malice bends their bows, to send out these arrows with so much the more force. (3.) The upright man is their mark, against him their spleen is, and they cannot speak peaceably either of him or to him. The better any man is, the more he is envied by those that are themselves bad, and the more ill is said of him. (4.) They manage it with a great deal of art and subtilty; they shoot in secret, that those they shoot at may not discover them, and avoid the danger, for *in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.* And suddenly do they shoot, without giving a man lawful warning, or any opportunity to defend himself. *Curfeth be he that thus smiteth his neighbour secretly, in his reputation, Deut. xxvii. 24.* There is no guard against a pass made by a false tongue. (5.) Herein they fear not, i. e. they are confident of their success, and doubt not but these methods they shall gain the point which their malice aims at. Or rather they fear not the wrath of God, which will be the portion of a false tongue. They are impudent and bring in the mischief they do to good people, as if they must never be called to an account for it.

2. They are very close, and very resolute in their malicious projects, *ver. 5.* (1.) They strengthen and corroborate themselves and one another in this evil matter, and by joining together in it, they make one another the more bitter and the more bold, *fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhaerebit.* It is bad to do any ill thing, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in it, that is doing the devil's work for him. It is a sign the heart is hardened to the highest degree, when it is thus fully set to do evil, and fears no colours. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but when that is baffled, the case is desperate. (2.) They consult with themselves and one another how to do the most mischief, and most effectually; *they commune of laying snares privily.* All their communion is in sin, and all their communication is how to sin securely. They hold councils of war for finding out the most effectual expedients to do mischief, every snare they lay was talked of before, and was laid with all the contrivance of their wicked wits combined. (3.) They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God himself takes no notice of their wicked practices; *they say, who shall see them; A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked.*

3. They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution, *ver. 6.* They search out iniquity, i. e. they take a great deal of pains to find out some iniquity or other to lay to my charge, they dig deep, and look far back, and put things to the utmost stretch, that they may have something to accuse me of; or, they are industrious to find out new arts of doing mischief to me; in this they accomplish a diligent search; they go through with it, and spare neither cost nor labour; *evil men dig up mischief.* Half the pains that many take to damn their souls would serve to save them. They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction, for the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart is deep; deep as hell, desperately wicked, who can know it? By the unaccountable wickedness of their wit, and of their will they shew themselves to be both in subtilty and malignity the genuine offspring of the old serpent.

7. But God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded. 8. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see

them shall flee away. 9. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God: for they shall wisely consider of his doing. 10. The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

We may observe here,

1. The judgments of God which should certainly come upon these malicious persecutors of David. Though they encouraged themselves in their wickedness, here is that, which if they would believe and consider it, was enough to discourage them. And it is observable how the punishment answers the sin. (1.) They shot at David secretly and suddenly to wound him: but God shall shoot at them, for he ordains his arrows against his persecutors, *Psalm vii. 13. Against the face of them, Psalm xxi. 12.* And God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and pierce deeper than theirs do or can. They have many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind; the curse causeless shall not come; but one God has an arrow that will be their death, his curse which is never causeless, and therefore shall come, with it they shall be suddenly wounded, i. e. their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure and not apprehensive of any danger. (2.) Their tongue fell upon him, but God shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: They do it by the desert of their sin, God doth it by the justice of his wrath, *ver. 8.* When God deals with men according to the desert of their tongue-sins, and brings those mischiefs upon them which they have passionately and maliciously imputed upon others, then he makes their own tongues to fall upon them; and it is weight enough to sink a man in the lowest hell, like a talent of lead. Many have cut their own throats, and many more have damned their own souls with their tongues, and it will be an aggravation of their condemnation: *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; art snared in the words of thy mouth. If thou scornest, thou alone shall bear it.* They that love cursing, it shall come unto them. Sometimes men's secret wickedness is brought to light by their own confession; and then their own tongue falls upon themselves.

2. The influence which these judgments should have upon others, for it is done in the open sight of all, *Job xxxiv. 26.*

1. Their neighbours shall shun them, and shift for their own safety; they shall flee away, for fear of partaking in their plagues and being involved in their ruin; so dreadful it will be, and such a noise will it make in the country; they shall flee away as the men of Israel did from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, *Numb. xvi. 27.* Some think this was fulfilled in the death of Saul, when not only his army was dispersed, but the inhabitants of the neighbouring country were so terrified with the fall, not only of the king but of his three sons, that they quitted their cities and fled, *1 Sam. xxxi. 7.*

2. Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, *ver. 9.* (1.) They shall understand and observe God's hand in all; and unless we do so we are not likely to profit by the dispensations of providence, *Hos. xiv. 9. They shall wisely consider his doing.* There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to take the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it, God's doing is well worth our considering, *Ecc. vii. 13.* but it must be considered wisely, that we put not a corrupt gloss upon a pure text. (2.) They shall be affected with a holy awe of God upon the consideration of it. All men (all that have anything of the reason of a man in them) shall fear and tremble because of God's judgments, *Psalm cxix. 120.* They shall fear to do the like, fear being found persecutors of God's people; *smite the scorner, and the simple shall beware.* (3.) They shall declare the work of God; they shall speak to one another and to all about them in the justice of God in punishing persecutors; what we wisely consider ourselves, we should wisely declare to others, for their edification and the glory of God: *This is the finger of God.*

3. Good people shall in a special manner take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, *ver. 10.* (1.) It shall increase their joy, *The righteous shall be glad in the Lord;* not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow creatures, but glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocency pleaded effectually. 2. It shall encourage their faith, they shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty, and be willing to venture for him with an entire confidence in him. 3. Their joy and faith shall both express themselves in an holy boasting. *All the upright in heart* that keep a good conscience and approve themselves God shall glory, not in themselves, but in the favour of God, in his righteousness and goodness, their relation to him and interest in him; *let him that glories, glory in the Lord.*

P S A L M LXV.

In this psalm we are directed to give to God the glory of his power and goodness, which appears (1.) In the kingdom of grace, *ver. 1. Hearing prayer, ver. 2. Pardoning sin, ver. 3. Satisfying the souls of the people, ver. 4. Protecting and supporting them, ver. 5.* (2.) In the kingdom of providence fixing the mountains, *ver. 6. Calming the sea, ver. 7. Preserving the regular succession of day and night, ver. 8. And making the earth fruitful, ver. 9-13.* These are blessings we are all indebted to God for, and therefore may easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves in singing of it.

¶ To the chief musician.

A PSALM AND SONG OF DAVID.

1. **P**RAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. 2. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. 3. Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. 4. Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. 5. By terrible things in righteousness, wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation: who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.

The psalmist here has no particular concern of his own at the throne of grace; but begins with an address to God, as the master of an assembly, and the mouth of a congregation; and observe,

1. How-



1. How he gives glory to God, *ver. 1.* (1.) By humble thankfulness, *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion*: waits in expectation of the mercy desired, waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness at its first approach, when God is coming towards us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises, and wait till the day dawn. Praise waits with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will, and dependence on thy mercy; when we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God. Praise waits thine acceptance; the *Levites* by night stood in the house of the Lord, ready to sing their songs of praise at the hour appointed, (*Psal. cxxxiv. 1, 2.*) and thus their praise waited for him; *Praise is silent unto thee*, (so the word is) as wanting words to express the great goodness of God; and being struck with a silent admiration at it: As there are holy groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are holy adorings which cannot be uttered, and yet shall be accepted by him that searcheth the heart, and knoweth what is the mind of the spirit. Our praise is silent, that the praises of the blessed angels, who excel in strength may be heard: Let it not be told him that I speak, for if a man offer to speak forth all God's praise, surely he shall be swallowed up, *Job xxxvii. 20.* Before thee, praise is reputed as silence (so the Chaldee.) So far exalted is God above all our blessing and praise. Praise is due to God from all the world, but it waits for him in Sion only, in his church, among the people; all his works praise him, i. e. they minister matter for praise, but his saints only bless him by actual adorations. The redeemed church sings their new song upon mount Sion, *Rev. xiv. 1, 3.* In Sion was God's dwelling-place, (*Psal. lxxvi. 2.*) Happy they who dwell with him there, for they will be still praising him. (2.) By sincere faithfulness. *Unto thee shall the vow be performed*, i. e. the sacrifice shall be offered up which was vowed. We shall not be accepted in our thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received, unless we make conscience of paying the vows which we made when we were in pursuit of the mercy; for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay.

2. What he gives him glory for,

1. For hearing prayer, *ver. 2.* *Praise waits for thee*; and why is it so ready? (1.) Because thou art ready to grant our petitions. O thou that hearest prayer; thou canst answer every prayer, for thou art able to do for us more than we are able to ask or think, *Eph. iii. 20.* and thou wilt answer every prayer of faith either in kind or kindness. It is much for the glory of God's goodness, and the encouragement of ours, that he is a God hearing prayer, and has taken it among the titles of his honour to be so; and we are much wanting to ourselves if we do not take all occasions to give him his title. 2. Because for that reason we are ready to run to him when we are in our straits; therefore, because thou art a God hearing prayer unto thee shall all flesh come; justly doth every man's praise wait for thee, because every man's prayer waits on thee, when he is in want or distress, whatever he doth at other times. Now only the seed of Israel come to thee, and the proselytes to their religion; but when thy house shall be called a house of prayer to all people, then unto thee shall all flesh come and be welcome, *Rom. x. 12, 13.* To him let us come, and come boldly, because he is a God that hears prayer.

2. For pardoning sin. In this, *Who is a God like unto him?* *Micah vii. 18.* By this he proclaims his name, *Exod. xxxiv. 7.* and therefore upon this account praise waits for him, *ver. 3.* Our sins reach to the heavens, iniquities prevail against us, and appear so numerous, so heinous, that when they are set in order before us, we are full of confusion and ready to fall into despair. They prevail so against us, that we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own; so that when we appear before God, our own consciences accuse us, and we have no replication to make; and yet, as for our transgressions, thou shalt of thine own free mercy, and for the sake of the righteousness of thine own providing, thou shalt purge them away, so that we shall not come into condemnation for them. Note, The greater our danger is by reason of sin, the more cause we have to admire the power and riches of God's pardoning mercy, which can invalidate the threatening force of our manifold transgressions, and our mighty sins.

3. For the kind entertainment he gives to those that attend upon him, and the comfort they have in communion with him. Iniquity must first be purged away, *ver. 3.* and then we are welcome to compass God's altars, *ver. 4.* They that come into communion with God, shall certainly find true happiness and full satisfaction in that communion.

(1.) They are blessed; not only blessed is the nation, *Psal. xxxiii. 12.* but blessed is the man, the particular person, how mean soever, whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; he is a happy man, for he hath the surest token of the divine favour, and the surest pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss. Observe here, (1.) What it is to come into communion with God, in order to this blessedness. (1.) It is to approach to him by laying hold on his covenant, setting our best affections upon him, and letting out our desires towards him; it is to converse with him, as one we love and value. (2.) It is to dwell in his courts, as the priests and Levites did that were at home in God's house; it is to be constant in the exercises of religion, and apply ourselves closely to them as we do to that which is the business of our dwelling-place. (2.) How we come into communion with God, not recommended by any merit of our own, or brought in by any management of our own, but by God's free choice; blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and so distinguished from others who are left to themselves; and it is by his effectual special grace, pursuant to that choice; whom he chooseth, he causeth to approach; not only invites them, but inclines and enables them, to draw nigh unto him. He draws them, *John vi. 44.*

(2.) They shall be satisfied. Here the psalmist changeth the person, not he shall be satisfied, the man whom thou chooseth, but we shall; which teacheth us to apply the promises to ourselves, and by an active faith to put our own names into them. *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.* Note, 1. God's holy temple is his house; there he dwells where his ordinances are administered. 2. God keeps a good house; there is abundance of goodness in his house, righteousness and grace, and all the comforts of the everlasting covenant; there is enough for all, enough for each; it is ready, always ready; and all on free cost, without money and without price. 3. In those things there is that which is satisfying to a soul, and with which all gracious souls will be satisfied; let them have the pleasure of communion with God, and that sufficeth them, they have enough, they desire no more.

4. For the glorious operation of his power on their behalf, *ver. 5.* by terrible things in righteousness will thou answer us, O God of our salvation. This may be understood of the rebukes which God in his providence sometimes gives to his own people; he often answers them by terrible things, for the awakening and quickening of them, but always in righteousness; he neither doth them any wrong, nor means them any hurt, for even then he is the God of their salvation. See *Isa. xlv. 15.* But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies; God answers his people's prayers by the destructions made for their sakes among the heathen, and the recompence he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, the God to whom vengeance belongs, and as the God that protects and saves his people. By wonderful things (so some read it) things which are very

surprising, and which we look not for, *Isa. lxiv. 3.* Or by things which strike an awe upon us, thou wilt answer us; the holy freedom we are admitted to in God's court, and the nearness of our approach to him, must not at all abate our reverence and godly fear of him; for he is terrible in his

5. For the care he takes of all his people, howsoever distressed, and whithersoever dispersed: he is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, i. e. of all the saints all the world over, and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel; for he is the God of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews; the confidence of them that are afar off from his holy temple, and the courts of that, that dwell in the islands of the Gentiles; or that are in distress upon the sea. They trust in thee, and cry to thee when they are at their wit's end, *Psal. cxvii. 27, 28.* By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him wherever we are, not only in the solemn assemblies of his people, but afar off upon the sea.

6. Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power. 7. Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. 8. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoing of the morning and evening to rejoice. 9. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. 10. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers, thou bledest the springing thereof. 11. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. 12. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. 13. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

That we may be the more affected with the wonderful condescensions of the God of grace, it is of use to observe his power and sovereignty as the God of nature; the richness and bounty of his providential kingdom.

1. He established the earth, and it abideth, *Psal. cxix. 90. ver. 6.* By his own strength, he setteth fast the mountains: did set them fast at first, and still keeps them firm, though they are sometimes shaken by earthquakes, (*feriuntque summos, fulmina montes*) hence they are called everlasting mountains, *Hab. iii. 6.* Yet God's covenant with his people is said to stand more firm than they, *Isa. liv. 10.*

2. He fills the sea, and it is quiet, *ver. 7.* The sea in a storm makes a great noise, which adds to its threatening terror; but when God pleaseth he commands silence among the waves and billows, and lays them to sleep, turns the storm into a calm presently, *Psal. cxvii. 29.* And by this change in the sea, as well as by the former instance of the unchangeableness of the earth, it appears, that he, whose the sea and the dry land is, is girded with power. And by this, our Lord Jesus gave a proof of his divine power, that he commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed him. To this instance of the quieting of the sea, he adds, as a thing much of the same nature, that he stills the tumult of the people, the common people. Nothing more unruly and unagreeable than the insurrections of the mob, the insults of the rabble; yet even these God can pacify in secret ways, and which they themselves are not aware of. Or, it may be meant by the outrage of the people that were enemies to Israel, *Psal. ii. 1.* God has many ways to still them, and will for ever silence their tumults.

3. He renews the morning and evening, and their revolution is constant. *ver. 8.* This regular succession of day and night may be considered, (1.) As an instance of God's great power, and so it strikes an awe upon all. They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy signs or tokens: they are by them convinced that there is a supreme numen, a sovereign monarch, before whom they ought to fear and tremble; for in these things the invisible things of God are clearly seen; and therefore they are said to be set for signs, *Gen. i. 14.* Many of them that dwell in the remote and dark corners of the earth, were so afraid at these tokens, that they were driven to worship them, *Deut. iv. 15.* not considering that they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and godhead, and therefore they should have been led by them to worship him. (2.) As an instance of God's great goodness, and so it brings comfort to all. Thou makest the out-goings of the morning, before the sun riseth, and of the evening, before the sun sets, to rejoice. As it is God that scatters the light of the morning, and draws the curtains of the evening, so he doth both in favour of man, and makes both to rejoice, i. e. gives occasion to us to rejoice in both; so that how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them, *Gen. i. 4.* both are equally welcome to the world in their season; it is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning, which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening, which befriends the repose of the night. Doth the watchman wait for the morning? So doth the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in, and in which God was constantly honoured. Thou makest them to sing, so the word is, for every morning and every evening songs of praise were sung by the Levites, it was that which the duty of every day required. And we are to look upon our daily worship alone, and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily business and the most delightful of our daily comforts; and if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

4. He watered the earth, and maketh fruitful; on this instance of God's power and goodness he enlarges very much. The psalm being probably penned upon occasion either of a more than ordinary plentiful harvest, or of a seasonable rain after long drought. How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper is easy to observe; if the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron; which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world, that every good and perfect gift is, from above, *omnia desuper*, that we must lift up our eyes above the hills, lift them up to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, out of sight; and thither must our praises return; as the first fruits of the earth were in the eave-offerings lifted up towards heaven, by way of acknowledgement that thence they were derived. All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us.

Now observe how the common blessing of rain from heaven and fruitful seasons is here described.

1. How much there is in it of the power and goodness of God; which



is here set forth by a great variety of lively expressions. (1.) God that made the earth hereby visits it, sends to it, gives proof of his care of it ver. 9. It is a visit in mercy, which the inhabitants of the earth ought to return in praise. (2.) God that made it a dry land, hereby waters it, in order to its fertility: though the products of the earth flourished, before God had caused it to rain, yet even then there was a mist which answered the intention, and watered the whole face of the ground, Gen. ii. 5, 6. Our hearts are dry and barren, unless God himself be as the dew to us, and water us; and the plants of his own planting he will water, and make them to increase. (3.) Rain is the river of God, which is full of water; the clouds are the springs of this river, which do not flow at random, but in the channel which God cuts out for it. The showers of rain, as the rivers of water, he turneth which way soever he pleaseth. (4.) This river of God enricheth the earth, which without it would quickly be a poor thing. The riches of the earth which are produced out of its surface, are every jot as valuable and abundantly more useful and serviceable to man, than those which are hid in its bowels; we might live well enough without silver and gold; but not without corn and grass.

2. How much benefit and advantage comes by it to the earth, and to man upon it.

1. To the earth itself; the rain in season gives it a new face, nothing more reviving, more refreshing, than the rain upon the new mown grass, Psal. lxxii. 6. even the ridges of the earth, on which the rain seems to slide, are watered abundantly, for they drink in the rain which comes often upon them; the furrows of it which are turned up by the plough, in order to the seedness, are settled by the rain, and made fit to receive the seed, ver. 10. they are settled by being made soft. That which makes the soil of the heart tender, settles it; for the heart is established by that grace. Thus the springing of the year is blessed; and if the spring, the first quarter of the year be blessed, that is an earnest of a blessing of the whole year, which God is therefore said to crown with his goodness, ver. 11. to compass it on every side as the head is compassed with a crown, and to complete the comforts of it, as the end of a thing is said to crown it. And his paths are said to drop fatness; for whatever fatness there is in the earth which impregnates its products, it comes from the out-goings of the divine goodness. Wherever God goes he leaves the tokens of his mercy behind him. Joel ii. 13. and makes his path thus to shine after him. These communications of God's goodness to this lower world are very extensive and diffuse ver. 12. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and not only upon the pastures of the inhabited land. The deserts which man takes no care of, and receives no profit from, yet are under the care of the divine providence, and the profits of them redound to the glory of God, as the great benefactor of the whole creation, though not immediately to the benefit of man; and we ought to be thankful not only for that which serves us, but for that which serves any part of the creation, because thereby it turns to the honour of the Creator. The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds do, yet receives as much of the rain of heaven as the most fruitful soil; for God doth good to the evil and unthankful. So extensive are the gifts of God's bounty, that in them the hills, the little hills, rejoice on every side, even the north-side, that lies most from the sun. Hills are not above the need of God's providence: little hills are not below the cognizance of it. But as when he pleaseth he can make them tremble, Psalm cxiv. 6. so when he pleaseth he can make them rejoice.

2. To man upon the earth. God by providing rain for the earth, prepareth corn for man, ver. 9. As for the earth, out of it cometh bread. Job xxviii. 5. for out of it cometh corn; but every grain that cometh out of it, God himself prepareth; and therefore he provides rain for the earth, that thereby he may prepare corn for man, under whose feet he has put the rest of the creatures, and for whose use he has fitted them. When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raiseth the dead, but an instance of that power not much unlike it, appears by that of our Saviour, John xii. 24. and that the constant harvest we have by it is an instance of that goodness which endureth for ever, we shall have reason to think, it is no less than a God that prepares corn for us.

Corn and cattle are the two staple commodities, with which the husbandmen that deal immediately in the fruits of the earth are enriched; and both are owing to the divine goodness in watering the earth, ver. 13. To this it is owing that the pastures are clothed with flocks, ver. 13. So well stocked are the pastures, that they seem to be covered over with the cattle that are laid in them; and yet the pasture not overcharged: so well fed are the cattle, that they are the ornament and the glory of the pastures in which they are fed. The valleys are so fruitful, that they seem to be covered over with corn in the time of harvest. The lowest parts of the earth are commonly the most fruitful, and one acre of the humble valleys is worth five of the lofty mountains. But both corn-ground and pasture-ground, answering the end of their creation, are said to shout for joy and sing; because they are serviceable to the honour of God, and the comfort of man; and because they furnish us with matter for joy and praise; as there is no earthly joy above the joy of harvest, so there were none of the feasts of the Lord among the Jews, solemnized with greater expressions of thankfulness than the feast of in-gathering at the end of the year, Exod. xxiii. 16. Let all these common gifts of the divine bounty which we yearly and daily partake of, increase our love to God as the best of beings, and engage us to glorify him with our bodies, which he thus provides so well for.

## P S A L M LXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; and it is of such a general use and application, that we need not suppose it penned upon any particular occasion. All people are here called upon to praise God, (1.) For the general instances of his sovereign dominion and power in the whole creation, ver. 1-7. (2.) For the special tokens of his favour to the church, his peculiar people, ver. 8-12. And then, (3.) The psalmist praiseeth God for his own experience of his goodness to him in particular, especially in answering his prayers, ver. 13-20. If we have learned in every thing to give thanks for ancient and modern mercies, public and personal mercies, we shall know how to sing this psalm with grace and understanding.

To the chief musician, A song or psalm.

1. **MAKE** a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands. 2. Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious. 3. Say unto God, how terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. 4.

Vol. II. No. LXXXVI.\*

All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee, they shall sing to thy name. Selah. 5. Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. 6. He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot, there did we rejoice in him. 7. He ruleth by his power for ever, his eyes behold the nations; let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

In these verses the psalmist calls upon all people to praise God, *all lands*, ver. 1. All the inhabitants of the world that are capable of praising God. (1.) This speaks the glory of God, that he is worthy to be praised by all, for he is good to all, and furnished every nation with matter for praise. (2.) The duty of man, that all are obliged to praise God; it is part of the law of creation, and therefore is required of every creature. (3.) A prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles, to the faith of Christ; the time should come when all lands should praise God, and this incense should in every place be offered to him. (4.) A hearty good-will which the psalmist had to this good work of praising God; he will abound in it himself, and wishes that God might have his tribute paid to him by all the nations of the earth, and not by the land of Israel only. He excites all lands, (1.) To make a joyful noise to God; holy joy is that devout affection which should animate all our praises; and though it is not making a noise in religion that God will accept of, (hypocrites are said to *cause their voice to be heard on high*, Isa. lviii. 4.) yet in praising God, (1.) We must be hearty and zealous, and what we do must do it with all our might, with all that is within us; (2.) We must be open and public, as those that are not ashamed of our Master; and both these are implied in making a noise, a joyful noise. (2.) To sing with pleasure, and to sing forth for the edification of others, the honour of his name, i. e. of all that whereby he has made himself known, ver. 2. That which is the honour of God's name ought to be the matter of our praise. (3.) To make his praise glorious as far as we can. In praising God we must do it so as to glorify him, and that must be the scope and drift of all our praises. Reckon it your greatest glory to praise God; so some. It is the highest honour the creature is capable of, to be to the Creator for a name and a praise.

He had called upon all lands to praise God, ver. 1. and ver. 4. he foretels that they shall do so; *all the earth shall worship thee*; so in all parts of the earth, even the remotest regions, for the everlasting gospel shall be preached to every nation and kindred; and this is the purport of *it shall worship him that made heaven and earth*, Rev. xiv. 6, 7. And being thus set forth, it shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth more or less to worship God, and sing unto him. In gospel-times God shall be worshipped by singing of psalms; they shall sing to God, that is, *sing to his name*, for it is only to his declarative glory, that by which he has made himself known, not to his essential glory, that we can contribute any thing by our praises.

That we may be furnished with matter for praise, we are here called upon to come and see the works of God for his own works praise him, whether we do or no; and the reason why we do not praise him more and better, is because we do not duly and attentively observe them. Let us therefore see God's works, and observe the instances of his wisdom, power and faithfulness in them, ver. 5. and then speak of them, and speak of them to him, ver. 3. say unto God, *how terrible art thou in thy works! terrible in thy doings!*

1. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. God is terrible, i. e. admirable in his works through the greatness of his power; which is such, and shines so bright, so strong, in all he doth, that it may be truly said there are *not any works like unto his works*. Hence he is said to be fearful in praises, Exod. xv. 11. In all his doings towards the children of men he is terrible, and to be eyed with an holy awe. Much of religion lies in a reverence for the divine providence.

2. They are formidable to his enemies, and have many a time forced and frightened them into a feigned submission, ver. 3. *Through the greatness of thy power, before which none can stand, shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee*, they shall lie unto thee, (so the word is), i. e. they shall be compelled fore against their wills to make their peace with thee upon any terms. Subjection extorted by fear is seldom sincere, and therefore force is no proper means of propagating religion; nor can there be much joy of such profelytes to the church as will in the end be found liars unto it. Deut. xxxiii. 29.

3. They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, ver. 6. When Israel came out of Egypt, he turned the sea into dry land before them, which encouraged them to follow God's conduct through the wilderness; and when they were to enter Canaan, for their encouragement in their wars Jordan was divided before them, and they went through that flood on foot; and such foot, so signally owned by heaven, might well pass for cavalry rather than infantry in the wars of the Lord. There did the enemies tremble before them, Exod. xv. 14, 15. Josh. v. 1. But *there did we rejoice in him*; both trust his power (for relying on God is often expressed by rejoicing in him) and sing his praise, Psalm cvi. 12. There did we rejoice, i. e. our ancestors did, and we in their loins. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them.

4. They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion in the world, ver. 7. *He rules by his power for ever, his eyes behold the nations*. (1.) God has a commanding eye; from the height of heaven his eye commands all the inhabitants of the world, and he has a clear and full view of them all. *His eyes run to and fro through the earth*; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection. (2.) He has a commanding arm; his power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakened, never obstructed; *strong in his hand, and high is his right hand*. From hence he infers, *Let not the rebellious exalt themselves*; let not those that have revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, as Adonijah exalted himself saying, I will be king; let not those that are in rebellion against God exalt themselves, as if there were any probability that they should gain their point; no, let them be still, for God hath said, I will be exalted, and man cannot gainsay it.

8. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard. 9. Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. 10. For thou, O God, hast moved us; thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. 11. Thou broughtest us into the net, thou laidst affliction upon our loins. 12. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire



fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

In these verses the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him: let all lands do it, but Israel's land particularly. Bless our God; bless him as ours, a God in covenant with us, and that takes care of us as his own: Let them make the voice of his praise to be heard, ver. 8. for from whom should it be heard, but from those who are his peculiar favourites and select attendants?

Two things we have reason to bless God for,

1. Common protection, ver. 9. He holdeth our soul in life, that it may not drop away of itself; for being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers: We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together, and his visitation that preserves our spirit; he puts our soul in life: so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued creation. When we are ready to faint and perish, he restoreth our soul, and so puts it as it were into a new life, giving new comforts; *Non est vivere, sed valere vita.* But we are apt to stumble and fall, and are exposed to many destructive accidents, killing disasters as well as killing diseases, and therefore as to these also we are guarded by the divine power: he suffereth not our feet to be moved, preventing many unforeseen evils which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from: To him we owe it that we have not long ere this fallen into endless ruin. He will keep the feet of his saints.

2. Special deliverance from great distress. Observe,

1. How grievous the distress and danger was, ver. 11, 12. What particular trouble of the church this infers to doth not appear: it might be the trouble of some private persons or families only: But whatever it was, they were surprised with it, as a bird with a snare, inclosed and intangled in it as a fish in a net; they were pressed down with it, and kept under as with a load upon their loins, ver. 11. But they owned the hand of God in it; we are never in the net; but God brings us into it; never under affliction, but God lays it upon us; Is any thing more dangerous than fire and water? we went through both, i. e. afflictions of different kinds; the end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers, we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints, but he has promised, when thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee, Isa. xlii. 2. Yet proud and cruel men may be as dangerous as fire and water, and more so; Beware of men, Matt. x. 17. When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is threatening, Psalm cxxiv. 2, 3, 4. And that was the case here; thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, i. e. to trample upon us and insult over us; to Hector and abuse us, nay, and to make perfect slaves of us, they have laid to our souls, bow down that we may go over, Isa. li. 23. While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads: yet the afflicted church in this also owns the hand of God, thou hast caused them thus to abuse us; for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.

2. How gracious God's design was in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is, ver. 10. Thou, O God, has proved us, and tried us. Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace and love at the bottom of them, and our own honour and benefit in the end of them. By affliction we are proved as silver in the fire. (1.) That our graces by being tried, may be made more evident, and so we may be approved, as silver when it is touched and marked sterling, and this will be to our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 7. and perhaps in this world; Job's integrity and constancy were manifested by his afflictions. (2.) That our graces by being exercised may be made more strong and active, and so we may be improved, as silver when it is refined by the fire, and made more clear from its dross; and this will be to our unspeakable advantage, for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. Public troubles are for the purifying of the church, Dan. xi. 35. Rev. ii. 10. Deut. viii. 2.

3. How glorious the issue was at last; The troubles of the church will certainly end well; these do so. For, (1.) The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, but they get through them; we went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods. Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God there is a way through them. (2.) The inlet to a better state is much more happy; Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place, into a well-watered place, for the word is, like the garden of the Lord, and therefore fruitful. God brings his people into trouble, that their comforts afterwards may be the sweeter, and that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

13. I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows. 14. Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken when I was in trouble. 15. I will offer unto thee burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah. 16. Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. 17. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart; the Lord will not hear me. 19. But verily God hath heard me: he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. 20. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

The psalmist having before stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, to bless the Lord, here stirs up himself, and engageth himself to do it.

1. In his devotions to his God, ver. 13, 14, 15. He had called upon others to sing God's praises, and to make a joyful noise with them; but for himself, his resolutions go farther, and he will praise God.

(1.) By costly sacrifices, which under the law were offered to the honour of God. All people had not wherewithal to offer these sacrifices, or want ed zeal to be at such an expence in praising God; but David for his part being able, is as willing in this chargeable way to pay his homage to God, ver. 13. I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings. His sacrifices should be public, in the place which God had chosen; I will go into thy house with them. Christ is our temple, to whom we must bring our spiritual gifts, and by whom they are sanctified. They should be the best of the kind; burnt sacrifices, which were wholly consumed upon the altar to the honour

of God, and of which the offerer had no share, and burnt sacrifices of fatlings, not the lame or the lean, but the best fed, and such as would be most acceptable at his own table. God that is the best, must be served with the best we have. The feast God makes for us is a feast of fat things, full of merriment, Isa. xxx. 6. and such sacrifices should we bring to him. He will offer bullocks with goats, so liberal would he be in his return of praise, and not strait-handed; he would not offer that which costs him nothing; but that which costs him a great deal; and with this the incense of rams, i. e. with the fat of rams, which being burnt upon the altar, the smoke of it would ascend like the smoke of incense. Or rams with incense. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the fattest of our sacrifices will not be accepted.

(2.) By a conscientious performance of his vows. We do not acceptably praise God for our deliverances out of trouble, unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble. This was the psalmist's resolution, ver. 13, 14. I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, when I was in trouble. Note, (1.) It is very common and very commendable, when we are under the pressure of any affliction, or in the pursuit of any mercy, to make vows and solemnly to speak them before the Lord; to bind ourselves out from sin, and bind ourselves more closely to our duty; not as if these were an equivalent of valuable consideration, for the favour of God, but a qualification of us to receive the tokens of that favour. (2.) The vows which we made when we were in trouble, must not be forgotten when the trouble is over, but be carefully performed, for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay.

2. In his declarations to his friends, ver. 10. He calls together a congregation of good people to hear his thankful narrative of God's favours to him; Come and hear, all ye that fear God, for, (1.) You will join with me in my praises; and help me in giving thanks: And we should be as desirous of the assistance of those that fear God in returning thanks for the mercies we have received, as in praying for those we want. (2.) You will be edified and encouraged by that which I have to say: The humble shall hear of it, and be glad, Psalm xxxiv. 2. They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, Psalm cxix. 74, and therefore let me have their company, I will declare to them, not to vain carnal people that will banter it and make a jest of it, pearls are not to be cast before swine; but to them that fear God, and will make a good use of it, I will declare what God hath done for my soul; not in pride and vain glory, that he might be thought more a favourite of heaven than other people, but for the honour of God, to which we owe this as a just debt, and for the edification of others. Note, God's people should communicate their experiences to each other; we should take all occasions to tell one another of the great and kind things which God has done for us, especially which he hath done for our souls, the spiritual blessings with which he hath blessed us in heavenly things; these we should be most affected with ourselves, and therefore with these we should be desirous to affect others.

Now what was it that God had done for his soul?

1. He had wrought in him a love to the duty of prayer, and had by his grace enlarged his heart in that duty, ver. 17. I cried unto him with my mouth; but if God among other things done for our souls, had not given us the Spirit of adoption, teaching and enabling us to cry Abba Father, we should never have done it. That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention with thankfulness to his praise; and the more if when we cried to him with our mouth, he was extolled with our tongue, i. e. if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him then, when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him; and to praise him for mercy in prospect, though it be not yet in possession. By crying to him we do indeed extol him; He is pleased to reckon himself honoured by the humble believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that he has been pleased so far to twist interest with us, as that in seeking our own welfare we seek his glory. His exaltation was under my tongue, so it may be read, i. e. I was considering in my mind how I might extol and magnify his name. When prayers are in our mouths, praises must be in our hearts.

2. He had wrought in him a dread of sin as an enemy to prayer, ver. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, I know very well the Lord will not hear me. The Jewish writers, some of them that have the favour of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, put a very corrupt gloss upon these words; If I regard iniquity in my heart, that is, say they, if I allow myself only in heart-sins, and iniquity doth not break out in my words and actions, God will not hear me, i. e. he will not be offended with me, will take no notice of it, so as to lay it to my charge, as if heart-sins were no sins in God's account: the falsehood of this our Saviour has shewn in his spiritual exposition of the law, Matt. v. But the sense of this place is plain; If I regard iniquity in my heart, i. e. if I have favourable thoughts of it, if I love it, indulge it, and allow myself in it, if I treat it as a friend, and bid it welcome, make provision for it, and am loth to part with it, if I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel, though it be but a heart sin that is thus countenanced and made much of, if I delight in it after the inward man, God will not hear my prayer, will not accept it, nor be pleased with it, nor can I expect an answer of peace to it. Note, Iniquity regarded in the heart will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. They that continue in love and league with sin, have no interest either in the promise or in the mediator, and therefore cannot expect to speed in prayer.

3. He had graciously granted him an answer of peace to his prayers, ver. 19. But verily God hath heard me; though being conscious to myself of much sin in me, I began to fear that my prayers would have been rejected, yet to my comfort I found that God was pleased to regard them; This God did for his soul, by answering his prayer, he gave him a token of his favour, and an evidence that he had wrought a good work in him. And therefore he concludes, ver. 20. Blessed be God. The two foregoing verses are the major and minor propositions of a syllogism: If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayers, this is the proposition, but verily God hath heard me; that is the assumption, from which he might have rationally inferred; therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart; but instead of taking the comfort to himself, he gives the praise to God, Blessed be God, whatever are the premises, God's glory must always be the conclusion; God has heard me, and therefore blessed be God. Note, What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise: Mercies in answer to prayer do in a special manner oblige us to be thankful. He hath not turned away my prayer nor his mercy; lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. That he adds by way of correction, it was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it. Therefore God doth not turn away our prayer, because he doth not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our comforts, and therefore ought to be the matter of our praises.



P S A L M LXVII.

The psalm relates to the church, and is calculated for the public. Here is, (1.) A prayer for the prosperity of the church of Israel, ver. 1. (2.) A prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church, ver. 2, 3, 4, 5. (3.) A prospect of happy and glorious times when God shall do this, ver. 6, 7. Thus was the psalmist carried out by the spirit of prophecy to foretell the glorious state of the Christian church, in which Jews and Gentiles should unite into one flock; the beginning of which blessed work ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, and the completing of it, of our prayer and hope in singing this psalm.

To the Chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm or Song.

1. **G**OD be merciful unto us, and bless us: and thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. 3. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 4. O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. 5. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 6. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God even our own God, shall bless us. 7. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

The composing of this psalm is such as speaks the penman's affections very warm and lively; by which spirit of devotion, he was elevated to receive the spirit of prophecy, concerning the enlargement of God's kingdom.

1. He begins with a prayer for the welfare and prosperity of the church then in being, in the happiness of which he should share, and think himself happy, ver. 1. Our Saviour, in teaching us to say *Our Father*, has intimated that we ought to pray with and for others: so the psalmist here prays, not *God be merciful to me and bless me*, but *to us*, and *bless us*, for we must make supplication for all saints, and be willing and glad to take our lot with them. We are here taught, (1.) That all our happiness comes from God's mercy, and takes rise in that; and therefore the first thing prayed for is, *God be merciful to us*, to us sinners, and pardon our sins, *Luke xviii. 13.* to us miserable sinners, and help us out of our miseries. (2.) That it is conveyed by God's blessing, and secured in that, *God bless us*, i. e. give us an interest in his promises, and confer upon us all the good contained in them. God's speaking well to us, amounts to his doing well for us. God blesses us, is a comprehensive prayer; it is pity such excellent words should ever be used slightly and carelessly, and as a by-word. (3.) That it is completed in the light of his countenance; *God cause his face to shine upon us*, i. e. God by his grace qualify us for his favour, and then give us the tokens of his favour. We need desire no more to make us happy, than to have God's face shine upon us, to have God love us, and let us know that he loves us. *To shine with us*; so the margin reads it; *with us*, doing our endeavour, and let it crown that endeavour with success. If we by faith walk with God, we may hope that his face will shine with us.

2. He passeth from this to a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, ver. 2. *that thy way may be known upon earth.* Lord, I pray not only that thou wilt be merciful to us and bless us, but that thou wilt be merciful to all mankind, *that thy way may be known upon earth.* Thus public-spirited must we be in our prayers, *Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.* We shall never have the less of God's mercy, and blessing, and favour, for others coming in to share with us. Or it may be taken thus, *God be merciful to us Jews, and bless us*, that thereby thy way may be known upon earth; that by peculiar distinguishing tokens of thy favour to us, others may be allured to come and join themselves to us; saying, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*, *Zech. viii. 23.* These verses, which point at the conversion of the Gentiles, may be taken, (1.) As a prayer: and so it speaks the desire of the Old Testament saints; so far were they from wishing to monopolize the privileges of the church, that they desired nothing more than the throwing down of the inclosure, and the laying open of the advantages. See then how the spirit of the Jews in the days of Christ and his apostles, differed from the spirit of their fathers. The Israelites indeed that were of old desired that God's name might be known among the Gentiles, those counterfeit Jews were enraged at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles; nothing in Christianity exasperated them so much as that did. (2.) As a prophecy; that it shall be as he here prays. Many scripture prophecies and promises are wrapt up in prayers, to intimate, that the answer of the church's prayer is as sure as the performance of God's promise.

Three things are here prayed for, with reference to the Gentiles.

(1.) That divine revelation might be sent among them, ver. 2. Two things he desires might be known upon earth even among all nations, and not to the nation of the Jews only. (1.) God's way, i. e. the rule of duty let them all know, as well as we do; *what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of them*; let them be blessed and honoured with the same righteous statutes and judgments, which are so much the praise of our nation, and the envy of all its neighbours, *Deut. iv. 8.* (2.) His saving health, or his salvation; the former is wrapt up in his law, this in his gospel. If God makes known his way to us, and we walk in it, he will shew us his saving health, *Psalms l. 23.* They that have themselves experimentally known the pleasantness of God's ways, and the comforts of his salvation, cannot but desire and pray that they may be known to others, even among all nations. All upon earth are bound to walk in God's way, all need his salvation, and there is in it enough for all: And therefore we should pray, that both the one and the other may be made known to all.

(2.) That divine worship may be set up among them, as it will be where divine revelation is received, ver. 3. *Let the people praise thee, O God*, let them have matter for praise, let them have hearts for praise; yea, let not only some, but all the people praise thee, all nations in their national capacity, some of all nations. It is again repeated, ver. 5. as that which the psalmist's heart was very much upon. They that delight in praising God themselves, cannot but desire that others also may be brought to praise him; that he may have the honour of it, and they may have the benefit of it. It is a prayer, (1.) That the gospel might be preached to them, and then they would have cause enough to praise God, as for the day-spring after a long and dark night. *Ortus est sol*, *Acts viii. 8.* (2.) That they might be converted and brought into the church; and then they would have

a disposition to praise God; the living and true God, and not the dumb and dunghill deities they had worshipped, *Dan. vi. 4.* Then their hard thoughts of God would be silenced, and they should see him in the gospel, glads to be love itself, and the proper object of praise. (3.) That they might be incorporated into solemn assemblies, and might praise God in a body, that they might all together praise him with one mind and one mouth. Thus a face of religion appears upon a land, when God is publicly owned, and the ordinances of religious worship duly celebrated in religious assemblies.

(3.) That the divine government may be acknowledged and cheerfully submitted to, ver. 4. *O let the nations be glad and sing for joy.* Holy joy, joy in God, and in his name, is the heart and soul of thankful praise: *That all the people may praise thee, let the nations be glad.* They that rejoice in the Lord always, will in every thing give thanks. The joy he wisheth to the nations is holy joy, for it is joy in God's dominion; joy that God has taken to himself his great power, and has reigned, which the unconverted nations are angry at, *Rev. xi. 17, 18.* Let them be glad, (1.) That the kingdom is the Lord's, *Psal. xxii. 28.* That he as an absolute sovereign shall govern the nations upon earth. That by the kingdom of his providence he shall over-rule the affairs of kingdoms, according to the council of his will, though they neither know him nor own him; and that in due times time he shall disciple all nations by the preaching of his gospel, *Matt. xxviii. 18.* and set up the kingdom of his grace among them upon the ruin of the devil's kingdom. That he shall make them a willing people in the day of his power, and even the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. (2.) That every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord; Let them be glad that thou shalt judge the people righteously, i. e. that thou shalt give a law and gospel which shall be a righteous rule of judgment, and pass an unerring sentence according to that rule upon all the children of men; against which there will lie no exception. Let us all be glad that we are not to be one another's judges, but that he that judgeth us is the Lord, whose judgment we are sure is according to the truth.

3. He concludes with a joyful prospect of all good, when God shall do this, when the nations shall be converted, and brought to praise God.

1. The lower world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the fruits of that, ver. 6. *Then shall the earth yield her increase.* Not but that God gave rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons to the nations when they sat in darkness, *Acts xiv. 17.* But when they were converted, the earth yielded its increase to God; the meat and the drink then became a *meat-offering* and a *drinking-offering* to the Lord our God, *Joel ii. 13.* and then it was fruitful to some good purpose. Then it yielded its increase more than before to the comfort of men, who through Christ acquired a convenient title to the fruits of it, and had a sanctified use of it. Note, The success of the gospel brings outward mercies along with it sometimes, righteousness exalts a nation. See *Isa. iv. 2.—lxii. 9.*

2. The upper world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the favours of that which is much better; *God, even our own God shall bless us*, ver. 6. And again, ver. 7. *God shall bless us.* Note, 1. There are a people in the world, that can upon good grounds call God their God. 2. Believers have reason to glory in their relation to God, and the interest they have in him. It is here spoken with an air of triumph, *God, even our own God.* 3. Those who through grace call God their own, may with an humble confidence expect a blessing from him. If he be our God, he shall bless us with special blessings. 4. The blessing of God, as ours in covenant, is that which sweetens all our creature-comforts to us, and makes them comforts indeed; then we receive the increase of the earth as a mercy indeed, when with it God, even our own God, gives us his blessing.

3. All the world shall hereby be brought to do like them; *the ends of the earth shall fear him*, i. e. worship him; which is to be done with a godly fear. The blessings God bestows upon us, call upon us not only to love him, but to fear him, to keep up high thoughts of him, and to be afraid of offending him. When the gospel begins to spread, it shall get ground more and more till it reach to the ends of the earth. The heaven hid in the meal shall diffuse itself till the whole be leavened. And the many blessings which they will own themselves to have received that are brought into the church, invite others to join themselves to them. It is good to cast in our lot with those that are blessed of the Lord.

P S A L M LXVIII.

This is a most excellent psalm, but in many places the genuine sense is not easy to come at; for in this, as in some other scriptures, there are things dark and hard to be understood. It doth not appear when or upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but probably it was when God having given him rest from all his enemies round about, he brought the ark (which was both the token of God's presence, and a type of Christ's mediation) from the house of Obed-edom, to the tent he had pitched for it in Zion; for the first words are the prayer which Moses used at the removing of the ark, *Numb. x. 35.* From this he is led by the spirit of prophecy to speak glorious things concerning the Messiah, his ascension into heaven, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world. (1.) He begins with prayer, both against God's enemies, ver. 1, 2. and for his people, ver. 3. (2.) He proceeds to praise which, takes up the rest of the psalm, calling upon all to praise God, ver. 4. 26—32. and suggesting many things as matter for praise. (1.) The greatness and goodness of God, ver. 4—6. (2.) The wonderful works God had wrought for his people formerly, bringing them through the wilderness, ver. 7, 8. settling them in Canaan, ver. 9, 10. giving them victory over their enemies, ver. 11, 12. and delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, ver. 13, 14. (3.) The special presence of God in his church, ver. 15—17. (4.) The ascension of Christ, ver. 18. and the salvation of his people by him, ver. 19, 20. (5.) The victories which Christ would obtain over his enemies, and the favours he would bestow upon his church, ver. 21—28. (6.) The enlargement of the church by the accession of the Gentiles to it, ver. 29—31. And so he concludes the psalm with an awful acknowledgment of the glory and grace of God, ver. 32—35. With all these great things we should endeavour to be duly affected in singing this psalm.

To the Chief Musician.

A PSALM OR SONG OF DAVID.

1. **L**ET God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him, flee before him. 2. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. 3. But let the righteous be glad: let



let them rejoice before God, yet, let them exceedingly rejoice. 4. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. 5. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. 6. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains, but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

In these verses,

1. David prays to God to appear in his glory:

(1.) For the confusion of his enemies, ver. 1, 2. *Let God arise* as a judge to pass sentence upon them, as a general to take the field and do execution upon them; and let them be scattered, and flee before him, as unable to keep their ground, much less to make head against him: *Let God arise*, as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, and the children of darkness shall be scattered, as the shadows of the evening flee before the rising sun. Let them be driven away as smoke by the wind, which ascends as if it would eclipse the sun, but is presently dispelled, and there appears no remainder of it; *Let them melt as wax before the fire*, which is presently dissolved. Thus doth David comment upon Moses's prayer, and not only repeat it with application to himself and his own times, but enlarge upon it, to direct us how to make use of scripture prayers. Nay, it looks further to the Redeemer's victory over the enemies of his kingdom, for he was the angel of the covenant that guided Israel through the wilderness. Note, (1.) There are, and have been, and ever will be, such as are enemies to God, and hate him; that join in with the old serpent against the kingdom of God among men, and against the seed of the woman. 2. They are the wicked, and none but they that are enemies to God; the children of the wicked one. 3. Though we are to pray for our enemies as such, yet we are to pray against God's enemies as such, against their enmity to him and all their attempts upon his kingdom. 4. If God but arise, all his impenitent implacable enemies, that will not repent to give him glory, will certainly and speedily be scattered, and driven away, and made to perish at his presence: For none never hardened his heart against God and prospered. The day of judgment will be the day of complete and final perdition of ungodly men, 2 Pet. iii. 7. who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear, 2 Thess. i. 8.

(2.) For the comfort and joy of his own people, ver. 3. *Let the righteous be glad*, that are now in sorrow, *let them rejoice before God*, in his favourable presence: God is the joy of his people, let them rejoice whenever they come before God, yea let them exceedingly rejoice, let them rejoice with gladness. Note, Those who rejoice in God have reason to rejoice with exceeding joy; and this joy we ought to wish to all the saints, for it belongs to them, *Light is shewn for the righteous*.

2. He praise God for his glorious appearances, and calls upon us to praise him, to sing to his name, and extol him.

1. As a great God, infinitely great, ver. 4. He *rides upon the heavens*, by his name JAH. He is the spring of all the motions of the heavenly bodies, directs and manageth them, as he that rides in the chariot sets it agoing; and has a supreme command of the influences of heaven; he rides upon the heavens for the help of his people, Deut. xxxiii. 26. so swiftly, so strongly, and so much above the reach of opposition. Those he rules by his name Jah, or Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient being, the fountain of all being, power, motion and perfection: This is his name for ever. When we thus extol God we must rejoice before him; holy joy in God will very well consist with that reverence and godly fear wherewith we ought to worship him.

2. As a gracious God, a God of mercy and tender compassion. He is great but he despiseth not any, no not the mearest; nay, being a God of great power, he useth his power for the relief of those that are distressed, ver. 5, 6. The fatherless, the widows, the solitary, find him a God all-sufficient to them. Observe how much God's goodness is his glory. He that *rides on the heavens by his name Jah*, one would think should immediately have been adored as King of kings and Lord of lords, and the sovereign director of all the affairs of states and nations; he is so, but this he rather glories in, that he is a *father of the fatherless*. Though God be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. Happy they that have an interest in such a God as this; he that *rides upon the heavens* is a father worth having; thrice happy is the people whose God is the Lord. (1.) When families are beheaded, God takes care of them, and is himself their head, and the widows and the fatherless children shall find that in him which they have lost in the relation that is removed, and infinitely more and better. He is a *father of the fatherless* to pity them, and bless them, and teach them, to provide for them, and portion them. He will *preserve them alive*, Jer. xlix. 11. and with him they shall find mercy, Hos. xiv. 3. They have liberty to call him father, and to plead their relation to him as their guardian, Psalm cxlvi. 9. x. 14—18. He is a judge or patron of the widows, to give them counsel and to do them right; to own them and plead their cause, Prov. xxii. 23. He has an ear open to all their complaints, and an hand open to all their wants. He is so in his holy habitation; which may be understood either of the habitation of his glory in heaven, there he has prepared his throne of judgment, which the fatherless and widow have free recourse to, and are taken under the protection of, Psalm ix. 4—7. Or, of the habitation of his grace on earth, and so it is a direction to the widows and fatherless, how to apply themselves to God; let them go to his holy habitation, to his word and ordinances, there they may find him, and find comfort in him. (2.) When families are to be built up, he is the founder of them, God *setteth the solitary in families*, brings them into comfortable relations, that were lonely, gives them a convenient settlement that were unsettled; Psalm cxliii. 9. he *makes those dwell at home that were forced to seek for relief abroad*, (so Dr. Hammond) putting them that were destitute into a way of getting their livelihood, which is a very good way for man's charity, as it is of God's bounty.

3. As a righteous God, (1.) In relieving the oppressed; he *bringeth out those that are bound with chains*, and sets them at liberty who are unjustly imprisoned, and brought into servitude. No chains can detain those whom God will make free. (2.) In reckoning with the oppressors. *The rebellious dwell in a dry land*, and have no comfort, in that which they have got by fraud and injury. The best land will be a dry land, to those that by their rebellion have forfeited the blessing of God, which is the juice and fatness of all our enjoyments. Israel was brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, but were there better provided for than the Egyptians themselves, whose land, if Nilus failed them, as it sometimes did, was a dry land.

7. O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people; when thou didst march throughout the wilderness.

Selah. 8. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. 9. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain; whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. 10. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. 11. The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it. 12. Kings of armies did flee apace, and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. 13. Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. 14. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.

The psalmist here having occasion to give God thanks for the great things he had done for him and his people of late, takes occasion from thence to praise him for what he had done for their fathers in the days of old. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies, and revive our grateful sense of them. Let it never be forgotten;

1. That God himself was the guide of Israel through the wilderness, when he had brought them out of their chains, he did not leave them in the dry land, but himself went before them, in a *march through the wilderness*, ver. 7. It was not a journey but a march, for they went as soldiers, as an army with banners. The Egyptians promised themselves that the wilderness had shut them in, but they were deceived: God's Israel having him for their leader, marched through the wilderness, and were not lost in it. Note, If God bring his people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it, and bring them out of it, Cant. viii. 5.

2. That he manifested his glorious presence with them at mount Sinai, ver. 8. Never did any people see the glory of God, nor hear his voice as Israel did, Deut. iv. 32, 33. Never had any people such an excellent law given them; so expounded, so enforced. Then the *earth shook*, and the neighbouring countries it is likely felt the shock; terrible thunders there were, accompanied no doubt with thunder showers, in which the heavens seemed to drop; while the divine doctrine *dropt as the rain*, Deut. xxxii. 2. *Sinai itself*, that vast mountain, that long ridge of mountains, *was moved at the presence of God*, see Judg. v. 4, 5. Deut. xxxiii. 2. Hab. iii. 3. This terrible appearance of the Divine majesty, as it would possess them with a fear and dread of him, so it would encourage their faith in him and dependence upon him. Whatever mountains of difficulty lay in the way of their happy settlement, he that could move Sinai itself, could remove them, could get over them.

3. That he provided very comfortable for them both in the wilderness and in Canaan, ver. 9, 10. *Thou didst send a plentiful rain, and hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor*. This may refer, (1.) To the victualling of their camp with manna in the wilderness, which was rained upon them, as were also the quails, Psalm lxxviii. 24—27. and it might be fitly called a rain of liberality or munificence, for it was a memorable instance of the divine bounty. This confirmed the camp of Israel (here called God's inheritance, because he had chosen them to be a peculiar treasure to himself) when it was weary, and ready to perish: this confirmed their faith, and was a standing proof of God's power and goodness. Even in the wilderness God found a comfortable dwelling for Israel, which was his congregation. Or, (2.) To the seasonable supplies granted them in Canaan, that land *flowing with milk and honey*, which is said to *drink water of the rain of heaven*, Deut. xi. 11. When sometimes that fruitful land was ready to be turned into a barrenness for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein, God in judgment remembered mercy, and sent them a plentiful rain, which refreshed it again, so that the congregation of Israel dwelt therein, and there was provision enough, even to satisfy their poor with bread. This looks further to the spiritual provision made for God's Israel; the spirit of grace and the gospel of grace are the plentiful-rain, with which God confirms his inheritance, and from which their fruit is found, Isa. xlv. 8. Christ himself is this rain, Psalm lxxii. 6. *He shall come as showers that water the earth*.

4. That he often gave them victory over their enemies; armies, and kings of armies, appeared against them, from their first coming into Canaan, and all along in the times of the judges, till David's days, but first or last they gained their point against them, ver. 11, 12—14. Observe, here, (1.) That God was their commander in chief. *The Lord gave the word*, as general of their armies; he raised up judges for them, gave them their commissions and instructions, and assured them of success, *God spoke in his holiness*, and then *Gilead is mine*. (2.) That they had prophets, as God's messengers, to make known his mind to them, God gave them his word (*the word of the Lord came unto them*) and then *great was the company of the preachers*, prophets and prophetesses, for the word is feminine. When God has messages to send, he will not want messengers: Or perhaps it may allude to the women joining in their triumph when the victory was obtained, as was usual, Exod. xv. 20. 1 Sam. xviii. 7. in which they took notice of the word of God, triumphing in that as much as in his works. (3.) That their enemies were defeated and put to confusion. *Kings of armies did flee*, did flee with the greatest terror and precipitation imaginable, did not fight and flee, but flee and flee, retired without striking a stroke: they fled apace, fled and never rallied again. (4.) That they were enriched with the plunder of the field; *she that tarried at home divided the spoil*. Not only the men, the soldiers that abode by the staff, who were by a statute of distributions to share the prey, 1 Sam. xxx. 24. but even the women that tarried at home had a share; which intimates the abundance of spoil that should be taken. (5.) That these great things which God did for them were sanctified to them, and contributed to their reformation, ver. 14. *When the Almighty scattered kings for her*, for the church, *she was white as snow in Salmon*, purified and refined by the mercies of God; *when the host went forth against the enemy they kept themselves from every wicked thing*, and so the host returned victorious, and Israel by the victory was confirmed in their purity and piety. This account of Israel's victories is applicable to the victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer for those that are his, over death and hell. By the resurrection of Christ our spiritual enemies were made to flee, their power was broken, and they were for ever disabled to hurt any of God's people: This victory was first notified by the women (the she-publishers) to the disciples, Matt. xxviii. 7. and by them it was preached to all the world; whilst believers that tarry at home, that do not themselves contribute any thing towards it, enjoy the benefit of it, and divide the spoil.

5. That from a low and despised condition, they had been advanced to splendour and prosperity. When they were bond-slaves in Egypt, and afterwards when they were oppressed sometimes by one potent neighbour and sometimes by another, they did as it were *lie among the pots* or rubbish, as despised



despised broken vessels, or as vessels in which there was no pleasure, they were black and dirty and discoloured. But God at length delivered them from the pots, Psal. lxxxi. 6. and in David's time they were in a fair way to be one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the world, amiable in the eyes of all about them, like the wings of a dove covered with silver, ver. 13. "And so saith Dr. Hammond, under Christ's kingdom the heathen idolaters that were brought to the basest and most despicable condition, of any creatures, worshipping wood and stone, and given up to the vilest lusts, should from that detestable condition, be advanced to the service of Christ, and the practice of all christian virtues, the greatest inward beauties in the world." It may be applied also to the deliverance of the church out of a suffering state, and the comforts of particular believers after their despondencies.

15. The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan. 16. Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever. 17. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. 18. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. 19. Blessed be the LORD, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. 20. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issue from death. 21. But God shall wound the head of his enemies: and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

David having given God praise for what he had done for Israel in general, as the God of Israel, ver. 8. here he comes to give him praise as Zion's God in a special manner: compare Psal. ix. 11. Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion, for which reason Zion is called the hill of God.

1. He compares it with the hill of Bashan, and other high and fruitful hills, and prefers it before them, ver. 15, 16. It is true, Zion was but little and low in comparison with them, and was not covered over with flocks and herds as they were, yet upon this account it has the pre-eminence above them all, that it is the hill of God, the hill which he desireth to dwell in, and where he chooseth to manifest the tokens of his peculiar presence, Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. Note, It is much more honourable to be holy to God, than to be high and great in the world. Why leap ye, ye high hills? Why do you insult over poor Zion, and boast of your own height? This is the hill which God hath chosen, and therefore, though you exceed it in bulk, and be first rates, because on this the royal flag is hoisted, you must all strike sail to it. Zion was especially honoured because it was a type of the gospel-church, which is therefore called mount Zion, Heb. xii. 22. and this is intimated here, when he said, the Lord will dwell in it for ever, which must have its accomplishment in the gospel-Zion. There is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, no city to that which is incorporated by the gospel-charter, for there God dwells and will dwell for ever.

2. He compares it with mount Sinai, of which he had spoken, ver. 8. and shews that it has the Shechinah, or divine presence, in it, as really, though not as sensibly as Sinai itself had, ver. 17. Angels are the chariots of God, his chariots of war, which he makes use of against his enemies, his chariots of conveyance which he sends for his friends; as he did for Elijah, and Lazarus is said to be carried by the angels: And chariots of state, in the midst of which he shews his glory and power: They are vastly numerous; twenty thousands, even thousands multiplied. There is an innumerable company of angels in the heavenly Jerusalem, Heb. xii. 22. The enemies David fought with had chariots, 2 Sam. viii. 4. but what were they for number or strength to the chariots of God? Which while David had on his side, he needed not to fear those that trusted in chariots and horses, Psal. xx. 7. God appeared on mount Sinai attended with myriads of angels, by whose dispensation the law was given, Acts vii. 53. He comes with ten thousands of saints, Deut. xxxiii. 2. And still in Zion God manifests his glory, and is really present with a numerous retinue of his heavenly hosts, signified by the cherubims, between which God is said to dwell. So that, as some read, the last words of the verse, Sinai is in the sanctuary, i. e. the sanctuary was to Israel instead of mount Sinai, whence they received divine oracles. Our Lord Jesus has these chariots at command: when the first-begotten was brought into the world, it was with this charge, Let all the angels of God worship him, Heb. i. 6. they attended him upon all occasions, and he is now among them, Angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject to him, 1 Pet. iii. 22. And it is intimated in the New Testament that the angels are present in the solemn religious assemblies of christians, 1 Cor. xi. 10. Let the woman have a veil on her head, because of the angels, and see Eph. iii. 10.

3. The glory of mount Zion was the king which God set on that holy hill, Psal. ii. 6. who came to the daughter of Zion, Matt. xxi. 5. Of his ascension the psalmist here speaks, and to it is expressly applied, Eph. iv. 8. Thou hast ascended on high, ver. 18. compare Psal. xlviii. 5, 6. Christ's ascending on high is here spoken of as a thing past; so sure was it; and spoken of to his honour, so great was it. It may include his whole exalted state, but points especially at his ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father, which was, as much our advantage as his advancement. For (1.) He then triumphed over the gates of hell; he led captivity captive: i. e. he led his captives in triumph, as great conquerors used to do, making a shew of them openly, Col. ii. 15. He led those captive who had led us captives, and if he had not interposed would have led us captive for ever. Nay, he led captivity itself captive, having quite broke the power of sin and Satan; as he was the death of death, so he was the captive of captivity, Hos. xiii. 14. This speaks the complete victory which Jesus Christ obtained over our spiritual enemies, such as that through him we also are more than conquerors, that is, triumphers, Rom. viii. 37. (2.) He then opened the gates of heaven to all believers, Thou hast received gifts to men: he gave gifts to men, so the apostle reads it, Eph. iv. 8. For he received that he might give; on his head the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from him it might descend to the skirts of his garments: And he gave what he had received; having received power to give eternal life he doth bestow it upon as many as were given him, John xvii. 2. Thou hast received gifts for men, not for angels, fallen angels were not to be made saints, nor standing angels made gospel-ministers, Heb. ii. 5. Not for Jews only, but for all men, who ever will may reap the benefit of these gifts; the apostle tells us, what these gifts were, Eph. iv. 11. Prophets, apostles,

evangelists, pastors, and teachers, the institution of a gospel-ministry, and the qualification of men for it; both which are to be valued as the gifts of heaven, and the fruits of Christ's ascension. Thou hast received gifts in man; so the margin, i. e. in the human nature which Christ was pleased to clothe him with, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. In him as Mediator all fulness dwells, that from his fulness we might receive. To magnify the kindness and love of Christ to us in receiving these gifts for us, the psalmist observes, (1.) The forfeiture we had made of them. He received them for the rebellious also, i. e. for those that had been rebellious; so all the children of men had been in their fallen state; perhaps it is especially meant of the Gentiles, that had been enemies in their minds by wicked works, Col. i. 21. For them these gifts are received, to them they are given, that they might lay down their arms, their enmity might be slain, and they might return to their allegiance. This magnifies the grace of Christ exceedingly, that through him rebels are upon their submission not only pardoned but preferred: They have commissions given them under Christ, which some say in our law amounts to the reversing of an attainder. Christ came to a rebellious world, not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved. (2.) The favour designed us in them, he received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them; that he might set up a church in a rebellious world, in which he would dwell by his word and ordinances, as of old in the sanctuary: That he might set up his throne, and Christ might dwell in the hearts of particular persons that had been rebellious. The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking, was to rear up the tabernacle of God among men, that he might dwell with them, and they might themselves be living temples to his praise, Ezek. xxxvii. 27.

4. The glory of Zion's king is, that he is a saviour and benefactor to all his willing people, and a consuming fire to all those that persist in rebellion against him, ver. 19, 20, 21. We have here good and evil, life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us, like that, Mark xvi. 16. He that believes shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned.

1. They that take God for their God, and so give up themselves to him to be his people, shall be loaded with his benefits, and to them he will be a God of salvation. He that is our God, if in sincerity we avouch him to be so, and seek to him as our God, (1.) He will continually do us good, and furnish us with occasion for praise. Having mentioned the gifts Christ received for us, ver. 18. fitly doth he subjoin in the next words, Blessed be the Lord, for it is owing to the mediation of Christ that we live, and live comfortably, and are daily loaded with benefits. So many, so weighty are the gifts of God's bounty to us, that he may be truly said to load us with them, he pours out blessings till there be no room to receive them, Mal. iii. 10. So constant are they, and so unweary is he in doing us good, that he daily loads us with them, according as the necessity of every day requires. (2.) He will at length be unto us the God of salvation, of everlasting salvation, the salvation of God which he will shew to them that order their conversation aright, Psal. i. 23. the salvation of the soul. He that daily loads us with benefits, will not put us off with present things for a portion, but he will be the God of our salvation, and what he gives us now he gives as the God of salvation, pursuant to the great design of our salvation. He is our God, and therefore he will be the God of eternal salvation to us, for that only will answer the vast extent of his covenant-relation to us, as our God. But hath he power to complete this salvation? Yes certainly, for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death, i. e. The keys of hell and death are put into the hand of the Lord Jesus, Rev. i. 18. He having made an escape from death himself in his resurrection, he has both authority and power to rescue those that are his from the dominion of death, by altering the property of it to them when they die, and giving them a complete victory over it when they shall rise again; for the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And to those that shall thus for ever escape death, and shall find such an outlet from it as not to be hurt of the second death, to them surely deliverances from temporal death are mercies indeed, and come from God as the God of their salvation. See 2 Cor. i. 10.

2. They that persist in their enmity to him, it will certainly be their ruin, ver. 21. God shall wound the head of his enemies, of Satan, the old serpent, of whom it was by the first promise foretold, that the seed of the woman should break his head, Gen. iii. 15. Of all the powers of the nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, that oppose him and his kingdom among men, Psal. ex. 6. He shall wound the heads over many countries; of all those who ever they are that will not have him to reign over them, for those he accounts his enemies, and they shall be brought forth and slain before him, Luke xix. 27. He will wound the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses. Note, Those who go on still in their trespasses, and hate to be reformed, God looks upon as his enemies, and will treat them accordingly. In calling the head the hairy scalp, perhaps there is an allusion to Absalom, whose bushy hair was his altar. Or it notes, either the most fierce and barbarous of his enemies, that let their hair grow to make themselves look the more frightful; or the most fine and delicate of his enemies, that are nice about their hair; neither the one nor the other can secure themselves from the fatal wounds which divine justice will give to the heads of those that go on in their sins.

22. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea: 23. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. 24. They have seen thy goings, O God, even the goings of my God, my king, in the sanctuary. 25. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after, amongst them were the damsels playing with timbrels. 26. Bless ye God in the congregation, even the Lord from the fountain of Israel. 27. There is little Benjamin with their ruler the princes of Judah, and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali: 28. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. 29. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents unto thee. 30. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war. 31. Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.



In these verses we have three things,

1. The gracious promise which God makes of the redemption of his people, and their victory over his and their enemies, *ver. 22, 23.* The Lord said, in his own gracious purpose and promise, I will do great things for my people, as the God of their salvation, *ver. 20.* God will not fail the expectations of those who by faith take him for their God. It is promised, (1.) That he will set them in safety from their danger, as he had done for Moses; I will again bring them from the depths of the sea, as he did Israel, when he brought them out of the slavery of Egypt into the ease and liberty of the wilderness. And I will again bring them from *Babylon*, as he did Israel when he brought them from their wants and wanderings in the wilderness into the fulness and settlement of the land of Canaan; for the land of *Babylon* was on the other side Jordan, where they had wars with *Sihon* and *Og*, and from whence their next remove was into Canaan. Note, The former appearances of God's power and goodness for his people, should encourage their faith and hope in him for the future, that what he has done he will do again. He will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, *Isa. xi. 11.* and we may perhaps see repeated all the wonders which our fathers told us of. But this is not all, (2.) That he will make them victorious over their enemies, *ver. 23.* That thy feet may be dipped as thou passest along in the blood of thine enemies, shed like water in great abundance, and the tongue of thy dogs may lap in the same. Dogs licked the blood of Ahab; and in the destruction of the anti-christian generation, we read of blood up to the horses' bristles, *Rev. xiv. 10.* The victories with which God blessed David over the enemies of Israel are here prophesied of but as types of Christ's victory over death and the grave, for himself and for all believers in his resurrection (and theirs by virtue of his) out of the earth; and of the destruction of the enemies of Christ and his church, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

2. The welcome entertainment which God's own people shall give to these glorious discoveries of his grace, both in his word and in his works. Hath he spoken in his holiness? Has he said he will bring again from *Babylon*? What then is required in return to this?

(1.) That we observe his motions, *ver. 24.* They have seen, the people have seen thy goings, O God; while others regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands, they have seen the goings of my God, my king in the sanctuary. See here, (1.) How an active faith appropriates God: he is God and king: but that is not all, he is my God and my king; And those who thus take him for theirs, may see him in all his out-goings acting as their God, as their king, for their good, and in answer to their prayers. (2.) Where God's most remarkable out-goings are, even in the sanctuary, in and by his word and ordinances; and among his people in the gospel-church especially, in and by which is made known the manifold wisdom of God: These out-goings of his in the sanctuary far out-shine the out-goings of the morning and the evening, and more loudly proclaim his eternal power and godhead. (3.) What is our duty in reference to these out-goings, which is to observe them, This is the finger of God; surely God is with us of a truth.

(2.) That we give him glory in the most devout and solemn manner. When we see his goings in the sanctuary, (1.) Let those that are immediately employed in the service of the temple praise him, *ver. 25.* The Levites that were some of them fingers, and others of them players on instruments, that have the nearest views of his out-goings in his sanctuary, and from whom it is expected that they should lead in his praises. And it being a day of extraordinary triumph, among them were *dancers* playing with *tirels* to complete the concert. Thus (saith Dr. Hammond) when Christ is gone up to heaven the apostles shall celebrate and publish it to all the world, and even the women that were witnesses of it, shall affectionately join with them in "divulging it."

And (2.) Let all the people of Israel in their solemn religious assembly give glory to God; Bless ye God, not only in temples but in the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, or wherever there is a congregation of those that come forth from the fountain of Israel, that are of the seed of Jacob. let them concur in blessing God. Public mercies, which we jointly share in, call for public thanksgivings which all should join in. Thus (saith Dr. Hammond) all christians should be obliged solemnly to magnify the name of the Messiah, and to that end frequently to assemble together in the "congregation." And (3.) Let those among them that upon any account are the most eminent and make a figure, go before the rest in praising God, *ver. 27.* There was little Benjamin (that was the royal tribe in Saul's time) with their rulers, the princes of Judah, (that was the royal tribe in David's time) and their counsel, their captains or leaders. In the beginning of David's reign, there had been long war between Judah and Benjamin, but now they both join in praises for success against the common enemy. But why are the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali particularly mentioned? Perhaps, because those tribes lying towards the north, lay most exposed to the incursions of the Syrians, and others their neighbours that molested them, and therefore should be in a particular manner thankful for these victories over them. Dr. Hammond gives another reason, That these were the two learned tribes, *Naphtali giveth goodly words*, *Gen. xlix. 21.* and Zebulun had those that handle the pen of the writer, *Judg. v. 14.* These shall join in praising God, their princes especially. It is much for the honour of God, when those that are above others in dignity, power and reputation, go before them in the worship of God; and are forward in using their influence and interest for the advancing of any service that is to be done to him. Dr. Hammond notes from hence, that the kingdom of the Messiah should at length be submitted to by all the potentates and learned men in the world.

(3.) That we seek unto him, and depend upon him for the perfecting of what he has begun, *ver. 28.* In the former part of the verse the psalmist speaks to Israel, Thy God hath commanded thy strength, i. e. Whatever is done for thee, or whatever strength thou hast to help thyself, it comes from God, his power and grace, and the word which he has commanded: Thou hast no reason to fear while thou hast strength of God's commanding; and no reason to boast while thou hast no strength but what is of his commanding. In the latter part he speaks to God, encouraged by his experiences; Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Lord, confirm what thou hast commanded, and perform what thou hast promised, and bring to an happy end that good work which thou hast so gloriously begun. What God has wrought he will strengthen; where he has given true grace, he will give more grace. Some make this whole verse to be a believer's address to the Messiah, whom David calls God, as he had done, *Psal. xlv. 6, 8.* Thy God, i. e. God the Father, has commanded thy strength, i. e. has made thee strong for himself, as the man of his right hand, *Psal. lxxx. 17.* has treasured up strength in thee for us, therefore we pray, that thou, O God the Son wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, i. e. wilt accomplish thine undertaking for us, by finishing thy good work in us.

3. The powerful invitation and inducement which would hereby be given to those that are without, to come in and join themselves to the church, *ver. 29, 30, 31.* This was in part fulfilled by the accession of many profelytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentile nations

to the faith of Christ, and the making them fellow heirs, and of the same body with the seed of Israel, *Eph. iii. 6.*

1. Some shall submit for fear, *ver. 30.* The company of spear-men that stand it out against Christ and his gospel, that are not willing to be ruled by him, that persecute the preachers and professors of his name, that are furious and outrageous as a multitude of bulls, fat and wanton as the calves of the people, (which is a description of those Jews and Gentiles that opposed the gospel of Christ, and did what they could to prevent the setting up of his kingdom in the world; Lord, rebuke them, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till, conquered by the convictions of their consciences, and the many checks of providence, they be every one of them brought at length to submit themselves with pieces of silver, as being glad to make their peace with the church upon any terms. Even Judas submitted himself with pieces of silver, when he returned them with this confession, I have betrayed innocent blood. And see *Rev. iii. 9.* Many by being rebuked, have been happily saved from being ruined. But as for those that will not submit notwithstanding these rebukes, he prays for their dispersion, which amounts to a prophecy of it; Scatter thou the people that delight in war; who take such a pleasure in opposing Christ, that they will never be reconciled to him. This may refer to the unbelieving Jews, who delighted in making war upon the holy seed, and would not submit themselves and were therefore scattered over the face of the earth. David had himself been a man of war, but could appeal to God, that he never delighted in war and bloodshed for its own sake; as for those that did, and therefore would not submit to the fairest terms of peace, he doth not doubt but God would scatter them. Those are lost to all the sacred principles of humanity as well as christianity, that can delight in war, and take a pleasure in contention; but let them expect that sooner or later they shall have enough of it, *Isa. xxxiii. 1. Rev. xiii. 10.*

2. Others shall submit for fear, *ver. 29, 31.* Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, (this David speaks of in faith, for the temple of Jerusalem was not built in his time, only the materials and model were prepared) kings shall bring presents unto thee, i. e. rich presents shall be brought, such as are fit for kings to bring: And even kings themselves, that stand much upon the punctilios of honour and prerogative, yet shall court the favour of Christ at a great expence. There is that in God's temple, that beauty and benefit in the service of God, and in communion with him, and in the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, that is enough to invite kings themselves to bring presents to God, to present themselves to him as living sacrifices, and with themselves the best performances. He instanteth in Egypt, and Ethiopia, two countries out of which subjects and supplicants were least to be expected, *ver. 31.* Princes shall come out of Egypt, as ambassadors to seek God's favour, and submit to him; and they shall be accepted, for the Lord of hosts shall thereupon bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, *Isa. xix. 25.* And even Ethiopia that had stretched out her hands against God's Israel, *2 Chron. xiv. 9.* should now stretch out her hands unto God, in prayer, in presents, and to take hold on him; and that soon, Agree with thine adversary quickly. Out of all nations some shall be gathered in to Christ, and be owned by him.

32. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the LORD; Selah: 33. To him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. 34. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. 35. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places, the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.

The psalmist having prayed for, and prophesied of the conversion of the Gentiles, here invites them to come in and join with the devout Israelites in praising God, intimating that their accession to the church would be the matter of their joy and praise, *ver. 32.* Let the kingdoms of the earth sing praises to the Lord; they all ought to do it, and when they become the kingdoms of the Lord of his Christ, they will do it. God is here proposed to them as the proper object of praise upon several accounts.

1. Because of his supreme and sovereign dominion. He rides upon the heaven of heavens which were of old, *ver. 33.* compare *ver. 4.* He has from the beginning, nay, from before all time, prepared his throne; he sits on the circuit of heaven; guides all the motions of the heavenly bodies, and from the highest heavens, which are the residence of his glory, he dispenseth the influences of his power and goodness to this lower world.

2. Because of his awful and terrible majesty he sends out his voice, and that a mighty voice; which may refer either generally to the thunder, which is called the voice of the Lord, and is said to be powerful and full of majesty, *Psal. xxix. 3, 4.* or in particular to that thunder which God spake to Israel at mount Sinai.

3. Because of his mighty power. Ascribe ye strength unto God, *ver. 34.* Acknowledge him to be a God of such irresistible power, that it is folly to contend with him, and wisdom to submit to him; acknowledge that he has power sufficient both to protect his faithful subjects, and to destroy his stubborn adversaries; and give him the glory of all the instances of his omnipotence. Thine is the kingdom and power, and therefore Thine is the glory. We must acknowledge his power, (1.) In the kingdom of grace. His excellency is over Israel; he shews his sovereign care in protecting and governing his church; that is the excellency of his power, which is employed for the good of his people. (2.) In the kingdom of providence. His strength is in the clouds, whence comes the thunder of his power, the small rain and the great rain of his strength. Though God has his strength in the clouds, yet he condescends to gather his Israel under the shadow of his wings, *Deut. xxxiii. 26.*

4. Because of the glory of his sanctuary, and the wonders wrought there, *ver. 35.* O God thou art terrible out of thy holy places. God is to be admired and adored with reverence and godly fear by all those that attend him in his holy places, that receive his oracles, that observe his operations according to them, and that pay their homage to him. He displays that out of his holy places, which speaks aloud that he will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. Out of heaven, his holy place above, he doth and will shew himself a terrible God. Nor is any attribute of God more dreadful to sinners than his holiness.

5. Because of the grace bestowed upon his people; The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people, which the gods of the nations that were vanity and a lie could not give to their worshippers; how should they help them when they could not help themselves? All Israel's strength against their enemies came from God, they owned they had no might of their own, *2 Chron. xx. 12.* And all our sufficiency for our spiritual work and warfare is from the grace of God. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and not otherwise, and therefore he must have the glory of all we do, *Psal. cxv. 1.* and our humble thank for enabling us to do it, and accepting the work of his own hands in us.



If it be the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, they ought to say *Blessed be God*. If all be from him, let all be to him.

P S A L M LXIX.

David penned this psalm when he was in affliction; and in it, (1.) He complains of the great distress and trouble he was in, and earnestly begs of God to relieve and succour him, ver. 1—21. (2.) He imprecates the judgments of God upon his persecutors, ver. 22—29. (3.) He concludes with the voice of joy and praise, in an assurance that God would help and succour him, and would do well for the church, ver. 30—36. Now in this David was a type of Christ, and divers passages in this psalm are applied to Christ in the New Testament, and are said to have their accomplishment in him, ver. 4—9—21, and ver. 22. refers to the enemies of Christ. So that (like the xxiid psalm,) it begins with the humiliation, and ends with the exaltation of Christ, one branch of which was the destruction of the Jewish nation for persecuting him, which the imprecations here are predictions of. And in singing this psalm we must have an eye to the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed; not forgetting the sufferings of Christians too, and the glory that shall follow them; for it may lead us to think of the ruin reserved for the persecutors, and the rest reserved for the persecuted.

¶ To the chief musician upon Shoshannim. A Psalm of David.

**1.** **S**AVE me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. 2. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing, I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. 3. I am weary of my crying, my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. 4. They that hate me without a cause, are more than the hairs on mine head: They that would destroy me being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away. 5. O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee. 6. Let not them that wait on thee O LORD God of Hosts be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel. 7. Because for thy sake I have born reproach: shame hath covered my face. 8. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. 9. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me. 10. When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. 11. I made sackcloth also of my garment: and I became a proverb to them. 12. They that sit in the gate speak against me, and I was the song of the drunkards.

\* In these verses David complains of his troubles, intermixing with those complaints some requests for relief.

1. His complaints are very sad, and he pours them out before the Lord, as one that hoped thus to ease himself of a burden that lay very heavy upon him.

(1.) He complains of the deep impressions that his troubles made upon his spirit, ver. 1, 2. The waters of affliction, those bitter waters are come unto my soul; not only threaten my life, but disquiet my mind; they fill my head with perplexing cares, and my heart with oppressive grief: so that I cannot enjoy God and myself as I used to do. We shall do pretty well if we can but keep troubles from our hearts; but when they put us out of the possession of our own souls our case is bad. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but what shall we do when the spirit is wounded. That was David's case here: His thoughts sought for something to confide in, and with which to support his hope, but he found nothing: he sunk in deep mire, where there was no standing, no firm footing, the considerations that used to support and encourage him, now failed him or were out of the way; and he was ready to give up himself for good. He sought for something to comfort himself with, but found himself in deep waters that did overflow him, overwhelm him. He was like a sinking drowning man in such confusion and consternation. This points at Christ's sufferings in his soul, and the inward agony he was in, when he said, Now is my soul troubled; My soul is exceeding sorrowful; for it was his soul that he made an offering for sin. And it instructs us when we are in affliction, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, that we may be neither soured with discontent nor sunk into despair.

(2.) He complains of the long continuance of his troubles, ver. 3. I am weary of crying. Though he could not keep his head above water, yet he cried to his God, and the more death was in his view, the more life was in his prayers, yet he had not presently an answer of peace given in, no, not so much of that support and comfort in praying, which God's people used to have, so that he was almost weary of crying, grew hoarse, and his throat so dried that he could cry no more, nor had he his wonted satisfaction in believing, hoping and expecting relief, Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God; he had almost looked his eyes out in expectation of deliverance: And yet his pleading this with God is an indication, that he is resolved not to give off from believing and praying. His throat is dried, but his heart is not, his eyes fail but his faith doth not. Thus our Lord Jesus on the cross cried out, why hast thou forsaken me? And yet at the same time kept hold of his relation to him, My God, my God.

(3.) He complains of the malice and multitude of his enemies, their injustice and cruelty, and the hardships they put upon him, ver. 4. They hated him, they would destroy him, for hatred aims at the destruction of the person hated; but what was his iniquity, what was his sin, what provocation had he given them that they were so spiteful towards him? None at all; They hate me without a cause; I never did them an ill turn, that they should bear me such an ill will. Our Saviour applies this to himself, John xv. 25. They hated me without a cause. We are apt to use this unjustification of our passion against those that hate us. But it is rather an argument why we should bear it patiently, because then we suffer as Christ did, and may then expect that God will right us; they are mine enemies wrongfully, for I have been no enemy to them: in a world where unrighteousness reigns so much, we must not wonder if we meet with those that are our enemies wrongfully. Let us take care that we never do wrong,

and then we may the better bear it if we receive wrong. These enemies were not to be despised, but were very formidable, both for their number, they are more than the hairs on mine head; Christ's enemies were numerous, they that came to seize him were a great multitude; how were they increased that troubled him? and for their strength, they are mighty in authority and power? We are weak, but our enemies are strong; for we wrestle against principalities and powers. Then I restored that which I took not away. Applying this to David, (1.) It was what his enemies compelled him to; they made him suffer for that offence which he had never been guilty of. (2.) It was what he consented to, that if possible he might pacify them, and make them to be at peace with him. He might have insisted upon the laws of justice and honour, the former not requiring, and the latter commonly thought to forbid the restoring of that which we took not away, for that is to wrong ourselves both in our wealth and in our reputation: yet the case may be such sometimes as that it may become our duty: Blessed Paul, through free from all men, yet for the honour of Christ, and the edification of the church, made himself a servant to all. But applying it to Christ, it is an observable description of the satisfaction which he made to God for our sin by his blood: Then he restored that which he took not away, i. e. he underwent the punishment that was due to us, paid our debt, suffered for our offences. God's glory in some instances of it was taken away by the sin of man; man's honour, and peace, and happiness were taken away; it was not he that took them away; and yet by the merit of his death he restored them.

(4.) He complains of the unkindness of his friends and relations, and this is a grievance which with an ingenuous mind cuts as deep as any other, ver. 8. I am become a stranger to my brethren, they make themselves strange to me, and use me as a stranger, are shy of conversing with me, and ashamed to own me. This was fulfilled in Christ, whose brethren did not believe on him, John vii. 5. who came to his own, and his own received him not, John i. 11. and who was forsaken by his disciples, whom he had been free with as his brethren.

(5.) He complains of the contempt that was put upon him, and the reproach with which he was continually loaded. And in this especially his complaint points at Christ, who for our sakes submitted to the greatest disgrace, and made himself of no reputation; we having by sin injured God in his honour, Christ made him satisfaction, not only by divesting himself of the honours due to an incarnate deity, but by submitting to the greatest dishonours that could be done to any man. Two things David here takes notice of as aggravations of the indignities done him: (1.) The ground and matter of the reproach, ver. 10, 11. They ridiculed him for that by which he both humbled himself and honoured God. When men lift up themselves in pride and vain glory, they are justly laughed at for it; but David chastened his soul, and clothed himself in sackcloth, and from his abasing himself, they took occasion to trample upon him. When men dishonour God, it is just that it turn to their dishonour; but when David purely in devotion to God, and to testify his respect to him, wept, and chastened his soul with fasting, and made sackcloth his garment, as humble penitents used to do; instead of commending his devotion, and recommending it as a great example of piety, they did all they could both to discourage him in it, and to prevent others from following his good example, for that was to his reproach; they laughed at him as a fool for mortifying himself thus; and even for this he became a proverb to them; they made him a common subject to their banter. We must not think it strange if we be ill spoken of for that which is well done, and in which we have reason to hope that we are accepted of God. Our Lord Jesus was stoned for his good works, John x. 32. and when he cried, Eli, Eli, my God, my God, was bantered as if he called for Elias. (2.) The persons that reproached him, ver. 12. (1.) Even the gravest, and the most honourable, from whom better was expected. They that sit in the gate speak against me, and their reproaches pass for the dictates of senators and the decrees of judges, and are credited accordingly. (2.) The meanest, and the most despicable, the abjects, Psal. xxxv. 15. the scum of the country, the children of fools, yea, the children of base men, Job xxx. 8. Such drunkards as they make themselves vile; and he was the song of the drunkards; they made themselves and their companions merry with him. See the ill consequences of the sin of drunkenness, it makes men despisers of those that are good, 2 Tim. iii. 3. When the king was made sick with the bottles of wine he stretched out his hand with scorn, Hos. vii. 5. The bench of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful: See what is commonly the lot of the best of men, they that are the praise of the wife are the song of fools; but it is easy to those that rightly judge of things to despise being thus despised.

2. His confessions of sin are very serious, ver. 5. O God thou knowest my foolishness, both what is, and what is not; my sins that I am guilty of are not hid from thee, and therefore thou knowest how innocent I am of those crimes which they charge upon me. Note, Even then when as to men's unjust accusations we plead not guilty, yet before God we must acknowledge ourselves to have deserved all that is brought upon us, and much worse. This is the genuine confession of a penitent, who knows that therefore he cannot prosper in covering his sins, and that therefore it is wisdom to acknowledge it because it is naked and open before God. (1.) He knows the corruption of our nature. Thou knowest the foolishness that is bound up in my heart. All our sins take rise from our foolishness. (2.) He knows the transgressions of our lives; they are not hid from him, no, not our heart-sins, no not those that are committed most secretly. They are all done in his sight, and are never cast behind his back, till they are repented of and pardoned, this is apt to be applied to Christ, for he knew no sin, yet he was made sin for us; and God knew it nor was it hid from him, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief.

3. His supplications are very earnest. For himself, ver. 1. Save me, O God, save me from sinking, from despairing. Thus Christ was heard in that he feared, for he was saved from letting fall his undertaking, Heb. v. 7. For his friends, ver. 6. Let not them that wait on thee O Lord God of hosts, and seek thee O God of Israel: Under these two characters we ought to seek God, and in seeking him to wait on him, as the God of Hosts who has all power to help, and as the God of Israel in covenant with his people, whom therefore he has engaged in honour and truth to help;) Let not them be ashamed and confounded for my sake. This intimates his fear, that if God did not appear for him, it would be a discouragement to all other good people, and would give their enemies occasion to triumph over them: and his earnest desire, that whatever became of him, all that seek God and wait upon might be kept in heart, and kept in countenance, and might neither be discouraged in themselves, nor exposed to contempt from others. If Jesus Christ had not been owned and accepted of his father in his sufferings; all that seek God and wait for him had been ashamed and confounded; but they have confidence towards God, and in his name come boldly to the throne of grace.

4. His plea is very powerful, ver. 7—9. Reproach was one of the greatest of his burdens; Lord, roll away the reproach, and plead my cause, for, (1.) It is for thee that I am reproached; for serving thee and trusting in



in thee. *For thy sake I have borne reproach.* Those that are evil spoken of for well doing may with an humble confidence leave it to God to bring forth their righteousness as the light. (2.) It is with thee that I am reproached. *The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up,* i. e. has made me forget myself, and do that which they wickedly turn to my reproach. They that hate thee and thy house for that reason hate me, because they know how zealously affected I am to it. That is it that has made them ready to eat me up, and has eaten up all the love and respect I had among them. They that blasphemed God, and spoke ill of his word and ways, did therefore reproach David for believing in his word and walking in his ways. Or it may be construed as an instance of David's zeal for God's house, that he resented all the indignities done to God's name as if they had been done to his name. He laid to heart all the dishonour done to God, and the contempt cast upon religion; these he laid nearer to his heart than any outward troubles of his own. And therefore he had reason to hope God would interest himself in the reproaches cast upon God. Both the parts of this verse are applied to Christ: (1.) It was an instance of his love to his Father, that *the zeal of his house did even eat him up*, when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which minded his disciples of his text, *John ii. 17.* (2.) It was an instance of his self-denial, and that he pleased not himself, that the reproaches of them that reproached God fell upon him, *Rom. xv. 3.* and therein he set us an example.

13. But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. 14. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. 15. Let not the water-flood overflow me. Neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. 16. Hear me, O LORD, for thy loving kindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17. And hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble: Hear me speedily. 18. Draw nigh unto my soul and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies. 19. Thou hast known my reproach and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. 20. Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. 21. They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

David had been speaking before of the spiteful reproaches which his enemies cast upon him. *But as for me, my prayer is unto thee.* They spoke ill of him for his fasting and praying, and for that he was made the song of the drunkards: but notwithstanding that he resolves to continue praying. Note, Though we may be jeered for well-doing, we must never be jeered out of it: Those can bear but little for God, and their confessing of his name before men, that cannot bear a scold and a hard word, rather than quit their duty. David's enemies were very abusive to him, but this was his comfort that he had a God to go to, with whom he would lodge his cause. They think to carry their cause by insolence and calumny, but I use other methods, whatever they do, *As for me, my prayer is unto thee O Lord:* And it is in an acceptable time: not the less acceptable for being a time of affliction; God will not drive us from him, though it is need that drives us to him; nay, it is the more acceptable, because the misery and distress of God's people makes them so much the more the objects of his pity; it is reasonable for him to help them, when all other helps fail, and they are undone and see themselves so, if he do not help them. We find this expression used concerning Christ, *Isa. xlix. 8.* *In an acceptable time have I heard thee.* Now observe,

1. What his requests are, (1.) That he might have a gracious audience given to his complaints, the cry of his affliction, and the desire of his heart. *Hear me,* ver. 13, and again, *Hear me, O Lord,* ver. 16. *hear me speedily,* ver. 17. not only hear what I say, but grant what I ask. Christ knew that the Father heard him always, *John xi. 42.* (2.) That he might be rescued out of his troubles; might be saved from sinking under the load of grief; *deliver me out of the mire,* let me not sink in it (so some) but help me out, and *set my feet upon a rock,* *Psalm xl. 2.* might be saved from his enemies that they might not swallow him up, nor have their will against him; *let me be delivered from them that hate me,* as a lamb from the paw of the lion, ver. 14. Though I am come into deep waters, ver. 2, where I am ready to conclude that the floods will overflow me, yet let my fears be prevented and silenced, let not the water-flood though it flow upon me, overflow me, ver. 15. Let me not fall into the gulph of despair, let not that deep swallow me up, let not that pit shut her mouth upon me, for then I am undone. He gave himself for lost in the beginning of the psalm, yet now he has his head above water, and is not so weary of crying as he thought himself. (3.) That God would turn to him, ver. 16. That he would smile upon him and not hide his face from him, ver. 17. The tokens of God's favour to us, and the light of his countenance shining upon us, is enough to keep our spirits from sinking in the deepest mire of outward troubles, nor need we desire any more to make us safe and easy, ver. 18. draw nigh to my soul, to manifest thyself to it, and that shall redeem it.

2. What his pleas are to enforce these petitions.

1. He pleads God's mercy and truth, ver. 13. *In the multitude of thy mercy hear me.* There is mercy in God, a multitude of mercies, all kinds of mercy, inexhaustible mercies, mercy enough for all, enough for each; and hence we must take our encouragement in praying. And the truth of his salvation, i. e. The truth of all those promises of salvation which he has made to those that trust in him, is a further encouragement. He repeats his argument taken from the mercy of God, ver. 16. *Hear me, for thy loving kindness is good;* it is so in itself, it is rich, plentiful and abundant, it is so in the account of all the saints; it is very precious to them, it is their life, their joy, their all; O let me have the benefit of it! Turn to me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, ver. 16. See how highly he speaks of the goodness of God; in him there are mercies, tender mercies, and a multitude of them. If we think well of God, and continue to do so under the greatest hardships, we need not fear but God will do well for us; for he taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy, *Psalm cxlvii. 11.* 2. He pleads his own distress and affliction: *hide not thy face from me, for I am in trouble,* ver. 17. and therefore need thy favour; therefore it

will come seasonable; and therefore I shall know how to value it. He pleads particularly the reproach he was under, and the indignities that were done him, ver. 19. *Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour.* See what a stress is laid upon this: For in the sufferings of Christ for us, perhaps nothing contributed more to the satisfaction he made for sin which had been so injurious to God in his honour, than the reproach and shame and dishonour he underwent; which God took notice of, and accepted of, as more than an equivalent for the everlasting shame and contempt which our sins had deserved, who therefore must by repentance take shame to ourselves, and bear the reproach of our youth. And if at any time we be called out to suffer reproach and shame and dishonour for his sake, this may be our comfort, that he knows it, and he is beforehand with us, so he will not be behind-hand with us. The Psalmist speaks the language of ingenuous nature when he saith, ver. 20. *reproach hath broken my heart, I am full of heaviness;* for it bears hard upon one that knows the worth of a good name to be put under an ill character: but when we consider what an honour it is to be dishonoured for God, and a favour if we be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (as they dreamed it, *Acts v. 41.*) we shall see there is no reason at all why it should sit so heavy, or be any heart-breaking to us.

3. He pleads the insolence and cruelty of his enemies, ver. 18. *deliver me because of mine enemies,* because they were such as he had before described them, ver. 4. *Mine adversaries are all before thee,* ver. 19. i. e. thou knowest what sort of men they are, what danger I am in from them, what enemies they are to thee, and how much thou art reflected upon in what they do and design against me. One instance of their barbarity is given, ver. 21. *They gave me gall for my meat* (the word signifies a bitter herb, and is often joined with wormwood) and in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink. This was literally fulfilled in Christ, and did so directly point to him, that he would not say it is fulfilled, till this was fulfilled; and on purpose that his enemies might have occasion to fulfill it, he said, *I thirst,* *John xix. 30, 29.* And some think the hyssop which they put to his mouth with the vinegar, was the bitter herb which they gave him with the vinegar for his meat. See how particularly the sufferings of Christ were foretold, which proves the scripture to be the word of God: And how exactly the predictions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which proves him to be the true Messiah. This is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

4. He pleads the unkindness of his friends, and his disappointment in them, ver. 20. *I looked for some to take pity, but there was none;* they all failed him like the brooks in summer. This was fulfilled in Christ, for in his sufferings all his disciples forsook him and fled. We cannot expect too little from men, miserable comforters are they all; nor can we expect too much from God, for he is the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort and consolation.

22. Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. 23. Let their eyes be darkened that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake. 24. Pour out thy indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. 25. Let their habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents. 26. For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded. 27. Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. 28. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. 29. But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

These imprecations are not David's prayers against his enemies, but prophecies of the defraction of Christ's persecutors, especially the Jewish nation, which our Lord himself foretold with tears, and which was accomplished about forty years after the death of Christ. The two first verses of this paragraph are expressly applied to the judgments of God upon the unbelieving Jews by the apostle, *Rom. xi. 9, 10.* and therefore the whole must look that way. The rejection of the Jews for rejecting Christ, as it was a signal instance of God's justice, and an earnest of the vengeance which God will at last take on all that are obstinate in their infidelity, so it was and continues to be, a convincing proof of the truth of the Christian religion; one great objection against it at first was, that it set aside the ceremonial law; but its doing so was effectually justified, and that objection removed, when God set it aside with a witness by the utter destruction of the temple, and the sinking of those with the Mosaic economy that obstinately adhered to it in opposition to the gospel of Christ.

Let us observe here,

1. What the judgments are which should come upon the crucifiers of Christ; not upon all of them, for there were those who had a hand in his death, and yet repeated and found mercy, *Acts ii. 23.—iii. 14, 15.* But upon those of them and their successors, who justified it by an obstinate infidelity and rejection of his gospel, and by an inveterate enmity to his disciples and followers: See 1 *Theff. ii. 15, 16.* It is here foretold,

(1.) That their sacrifices and offerings should be a mischief and prejudice to them, ver. 22. *Let their table become a snare.* The altar of the Lord, which is called his table and theirs, because in feasting upon the sacrifices they were partakers of the altar: this should have been for their welfare or peace, for they were peace-offerings, but it became a snare and a trap to them, for by their affection and adherence to the altar they were held fast in their infidelity, and hardened in their prejudices against Christ, that altar which they had no right to eat of who continued to serve the tabernacle, *Heb. xiii. 10.*

Or, it may be understood of their common creature-comforts, even their necessary food; they had given Christ gall and vinegar, and therefore justly shall their meat and drink be made gall and vinegar to them. When the supports of life and the delights of sense through the corruption of our nature, become an occasion of sin to us, and are made the food and fuel of our sensuality, then our table is a snare, which is good reason why we should never feed ourselves without fear, *Jude 12.*

(2.) That they should never have the comfort either of that knowledge or of that peace which believers are blessed with to the gospel of Christ, ver. 23. That they would be given up, (1.) To a judicial blindness. Let their eyes be darkened that they see not the glory of God in the face of Christ. Their sin was, that they would not see, but shut their eyes against the light, loving darkness rather; their punishment was, that they should not see, but be given up to their own hearts lusts which were hardened, and the god of this world should be permitted to blind their minds, 2 *Cor. iv. 4.*

This







and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified, 5. But I am poor and needy, make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer, O LORD, make no tarrying.

The title tells us that this psalm was designed to bring to remembrance; to put God in remembrance of his mercy and promise, for so we are said to do when we pray to him, and plead with him, *Isa. xliii. 26. Put me in remembrance.* Not that the Eternal Mind needs a remembrance, but this honour he is pleased to put upon the prayer of faith. It was rather to put himself and others in remembrance of former afflictions, that we may never be secure, but always in expectation of troubles: And of former devotions, that when the clouds return after the rain, we may have recourse to the same means which we have formerly found effectual for fetching in comfort and relief. We may in prayer use the same words we have often used before; our Saviour in his agony prayed thrice, saying the same words; so David here useth the same words he had used before, yet not without some alterations, to shew that he did not design to tie himself or others to them as a form. God looks at the heart, not at the words.

1. David here prays, that God would make haste to relieve and succour him, *ver. 1—5. I am poor and needy*, in want and distress, and much at a loss within myself. Poverty and necessity, is a very good plea in prayer to a God of infinite mercy, who despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, and hath pronounced a blessing upon the poor in spirit; who filleth the hungry with good things. He prays, (1.) That God would appear for him to deliver him under his troubles in due time. (2.) That in the mean time he would come in to him to help him under his troubles, that he might not sink and faint. (3.) That he would do this quickly, *make haste*, *ver. 1. again, ver. 5. make haste, make no tarrying.* Sometimes God seems to delay helping his own people, that he may excite such earnest desires as these. *He that believeth doth not make haste*, so as to anticipate or out-run the divine counsels, so as to force a way of escape, or take any unlawful methods of relief: But he may make haste by going forth to meet God in humble prayer, that he would hasten the desired succour. *Make haste unto me*, for the longing desire of my soul is towards thee; I shall perish, if I be not speedily helped; I have no other to expect relief from. *Thou art my help and my deliverer.* Thou hast engaged to be so to all that seek thee; I depend upon thee to be so to me; I have often found thee so; and thou art sufficient, all sufficient to be so. Therefore make haste to me.

2. He prays, that God would fill the face of his enemies with shame, *ver. 2, 3.* Observe, (1.) How he describes them: they sought after his soul, his life, to destroy that; his mind, to disturb that; to draw him from God to sin, and to despair: They desired his hurt, his ruin; when any calamity befel him, or threatened him, they said, Aha, aha, so would we have it, we shall gain our point now, and see him ruined: Thus spiteful, thus insolent, were they. (2.) What his prayer is against them; *Let them be ashamed*, i. e. Let them be brought to repentance, so filled with shame, as that they may seek thy name, *Psal. lxxxiii. 16.* Let them see their fault and folly, in fighting against those whom thou dost protect, and be ashamed of their envy, *Isa. xxvi. 11.* However, let their designs against me be frustrated, and their measures broken; let them be turned back from their malicious pursuits, and then they will be ashamed and confounded, and, like the enemies of the Jews, *much cast down in their own eyes*, *Neh. vi. 16.*

3. He prays that God would fill the hearts of his friends with joy, *ver. 4.* That all those that seek God, and love his salvation, that desire it, delight in it, and depend upon it, may have continual matter for joy and praise, and hearts for both; and then he doubts not but himself to put in for a share of the blessing he prays for; and so may we if we answer the character. (1.) Let us make the service of God our great business, and the favour of God our great delight and pleasure, for that is seeking him, and loving his salvation. Let the pursuit of a happiness in God be our great care, and the enjoyment of it our great satisfaction. A heart to love the salvation of the Lord, and to prefer it before any secular advantages whatsoever, so as carefully to quit all rather than hazard our salvation, is a good evidence of our interest in it, and title to it. (2.) Let us then be assured that if it be not our own fault, the joy of the Lord shall fill our minds, and the high praises of the Lord shall fill our mouths. Those that seek God, if they seek him early, and seek him diligently, shall rejoice and be glad in him, for their seeking him as an evidence of his good-will to them, and an earnest of their finding him, *Psal. cv. 3.* There is pleasure and joy even in seeking God, for it is one of the fundamental principles of religion, that God is the rewarder of all those that diligently seek him. Those that love God's salvation shall say with pleasure, with constant pleasure (for praising God, if we make it our continual work, it will be our continual feast,) *Let God be magnified*, as he will be to eternity in the salvation of his people. All that with well to the comfort of the saints, and to the glory of God, cannot but say a hearty amen to this prayer, that those who love God's salvation may say continually, *Let God be magnified.*

P S A L M LXXI.

David penned this psalm in his old age, as appears by several passages in it; which makes many think that it was penned at the time of Absalom's rebellion; for that was the great trouble of his latter days: It might be occasioned by Sheba's insurrection, or some trouble that happened to him in that part of his life, of which it was foretold, that the sword should not depart from his house. But he is not over particular in representing his case, because he intended it for the general use of God's people in their affliction, especially those they meet with in their declining years; for this psalm, above any other, is fitted for the use of the old disciples of Jesus Christ. (1.) He begins the psalm with believing prayers; with prayers that God would deliver him and save him, *ver. 2—4.* and not cast him off, *ver. 9.* or be far from him, *ver. 12.* and that his enemies might be put to shame, *ver. 13.* He pleads his confidence in God, *ver. 1, 3, 5—7.* The experience he had had of help from God, *ver. 6.* and the malice of his enemies against him, *ver. 10, 11.* (2.) He concludes the psalm with believing praises, *ver. 14.* &c. *Never was his hope more established*, *ver. 16—18—20, 21.* *Never were his joys and thanksgivings more enlarged*, *ver. 15—19—22, 23, 24.* He is in an ecstasy of joyful praise, and in the singing of it we should have our faith in God encouraged, and our hearts raised in blessing his holy name.

1. **I**N thee, O LORD, do I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion. 2. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. 3. Be thou my strong ha-

bitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me, for thou art my rock and my fortress. 4. Deliver me, O my God out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. 5. For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth. 6. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels, my praise shall be continually of thee. 7. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. 8. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day. 9. Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth. 10. For mine enemies speak against me: and they that lay wait for my soul, take counsel together. 11. Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him, for there is none to deliver him. 12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. 13. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul: let them be covered with reproach and dishonour, that seek my hurt.

Two things in general David here prays for; that he might not be confounded, and that his enemies and persecutors might be confounded.

1. He prays, that he might never be made ashamed of his dependence upon God, nor disappointed in his believing expectations from him. And with this petition every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace; for God will never dash the hope that is of his own raising. Now observe here;

(1.) How David professeth his confidence in God, and with what pleasure and grateful variety of expression he repeats his profession of that confidence, still presenting the profession of it to God, and pleading it with him. We praise God, and so please him, by telling him (if it be indeed true) what an intire confidence we have in him, *ver. 1. In thee, O Lord, and in thee only, do I put my trust.* Whatever others do, I choose the God of Jacob for my help. They that are intirely satisfied in God's all-sufficiency, and the truth of his promise, and in dependence upon that as sufficient to make them amends, are freely willing to do and suffer, to lose and venture for him, may truly say, *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.* Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust; if we are shy of dealing with him, it is a sign we do not trust him. *Thou art my rock and my fortress*, *ver. 3.* and again, *Thou art my refuge, my strong refuge*, *ver. 7. i. e. I fly to thee, and am sure to be safe in thee, and under thy protection.* If thou secure me none can hurt me. *Thou art my hope and my trust*, *ver. 5. i. e. Thou hast proposed thyself to me in thy word as the proper object of my hope and trust; I have hoped in thee, and never found it in vain to do so.*

(2.) How his confidence in God is supported and encouraged by his experiences, *ver. 5, 6.* *Thou hast been my trust from my youth*, i. e. ever since I was capable of discerning between my right hand and my left, I stayed myself upon thee, and saw a great deal of reason to do so; for by thee have I been holden up from the womb. Ever since he had the use of his reason, he had been a dependent upon God's goodness, because ever since he had a being, he had been a monument of it. Note, The consideration of the gracious care which the divine providence took of us in our birth and infancy, should engage us to an early piety and constant devotedness to his honour. He that was our help from our birth, ought to be our hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we were capable of doing him any service, we should lose no time when we are capable.

This comes in here as a support to the psalmist in his present distress; not only that God had given him his life and being, bringing him out of his mother's bowels into the world, and providing that he should not die from the womb, nor give up the ghost when he came out of the belly; but that he had betimes made him one of his family, thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels into the arms of thy grace, under the shadow of thy wings, into the bond of thy covenant, thou tookest me into thy church, as a son of thine handmaid, and born in thy house, *Psal. cxvi. 16.* And therefore (1.) I have reason to hope that thou wilt protect me; thou that hast held me up hitherto, will not let me fall now; thou that madest me, will not forsake the work of thine own hands; that helpeth me when I could not help myself, will not abandon me now I am upon the matter as helpless as I was then. (2.) Therefore I have reason to resolve, that I will devote myself unto thee; *My praise shall therefore be continually of thee*, i. e. I will make it my business every day to praise thee, and will take all occasions to do it.

(3.) What his requests to God are in this confidence.

1. That he might never be put to confusion, *ver. 1. i. e.* that he might not be disappointed of the mercy he expected, and so made ashamed of his expectation. Thus we may all pray in faith, that our confidence in God may not be our confusion. Hope of the glory of God is hope that maketh not ashamed.

2. That he might be delivered out of the hand of his enemies, *ver. 2.* *Deliver me in thy righteousness*, i. e. As thou art the righteous judge of the world, pleading the cause of the injured; and punishing the injurious, cause me some way or other to escape: God uses with the temptation to make a way to escape, *1 Cor. x. 13.* *Incline thine ear unto my prayers*, and, in answer to them, save me out of my troubles, *ver. 4.* Deliver me, O my God, out of the hands of those that are ready to pull me in pieces. Three things he pleads for deliverance, (1.) The encouragement God had given him to expect it. *Thou hast given commandment to save me*, *ver. 3. i. e. Thou hast promised to do it, and such efficacy is there in God's promises, that they are often spoken of as commands: like that, Let there be light and there was light.* He speaks and it is done. (2.) The character of his enemies; they are wicked, unrighteous cruel men, and it will be for the honour of God to appear against them, *ver. 4.* for he is a holy just and good God. (3.) The many eyes that were upon him, *ver. 7.* *I am as a wonder unto many*; every one waits to see what will be the issue of such extraordinary troubles as I am fallen into, and such extraordinary confidence as I profess to have in God. Or, I am looked upon as a monster, an one whom every body shuns, and therefore am undone if the Lord be not my refuge. Men abandon me, but God will not.

3. That he might always find rest and safety in God, *ver. 3.* *Be thou my strong habitation*, be thou to me a rock of repose, whereunto I may continually resort. They are at home in God, that live a life of communion with him, and confidence in him, that continually resort unto him by faith and prayer, having their eyes ever towards him, may promise themselves a strong habitation in him, such as will, never fail of itself, nor can ever be broken through



through by any invading power; and they shall be welcome to resort to him continually upon all occasions, and not be upbraided as coming too often.

4. That he might have continual matter for thanksgiving to God, and might be continually employed in that pleasant work, *ver. 8. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise*, as now it is with complaints, and then I shall not be ashamed of my hope, but my enemies will be ashamed of their insolence: They that love God, love to be praising him, and desire to be doing it all the day; not only in their morning and evening devotions, not only *seven times a day*, Psalm cxix. 164, but *all the day*, to intermix with all they say something or other that may redound to the honour and praise of God. They resolve to do it while they live, they hope to be doing it eternally in a better world.

5. That he might not be neglected now in his declining years, *ver. 9. Cast me not off now in the time of my old age, forsake me not when my strength fails*. Observe here, (1.) The natural sense he had of the infirmities of age; *my strength fails*; where there was strength of body, and vigour of mind, strong sight, strong voice, strong limbs, alas! in old age they fail; the life is continued, but the strength is gone, or that which is, is *labour and sorrow*, Psalm xc. 10. (2.) The gracious desire he had of the continuance of God's presence with him under these infirmities. Lord, *cast me not off, do not then forsake me*. This intimates that he should look upon himself as undone, if God should abandon him; to be cast off and forsaken of God is a thing to be dreaded at any time, especially in the time of old age, and when our strength fails us; for it is God that is the strength of our heart. But it intimates, that he had reason to hope God would not desert him; the faithful servants of God may be comfortably assured, that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails them. He is a master that doth not use to cast off old servants. In this confidence David here prays again, *ver. 12. O God be not far from me*, let me not be under the apprehension of thy withdrawals, for then I am miserable; *O my God, a God in covenant with me, make haste for my help*, lest I perish before help come.

2. He prays that his enemies might be made ashamed of their designs against him. Observe, (1.) What it was that they unjustly said against him, *ver. 10, 11. Their plot was deep and desperate, it was against his life, they lay wait for my soul*, *ver. 10. and are adversaries to that*, *ver. 13. Their powers and policies were combined, they take counsel together, and very insolent they were in their carriage; they say, God has forsaken him, persecute and take him*. Here their premises are utterly false, that because a good man was in great trouble, and had continued long in it, and was not so soon delivered as perhaps he expected, that therefore God had forsaken him, and would have no more to do with him. All are not forsaken of God, who think so themselves, or whom others think to be so. And as their premises were false, so their inference was barbarous. If God has forsaken him, then persecute and take him, and doubt not but to make a prey of him. This is *talking to the grief of one whom God hath smitten*, Psalm lxxix. 26. But thus they endeavour to discourage David, as Sennacherib endeavoured to intimidate Hezekiah, by suggesting that God was his enemy, and fought against him, *Am I now come up without the Lord against this city to destroy it? Isa. xxxvi. 10*. It is true, if God has forsaken a man, there is none to deliver him; but therefore to insult over him, ill becomes those who are conscious to themselves, that they deserve to be for ever forsaken of God. But *rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, though I fall I shall rise*. He that seems to forsake for a small moment, will gather with everlasting kindness. (2.) What it was which he justly prayed against, from a spirit of prophecy, not a spirit of passion, *ver. 13. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul*. If they will not be confounded by repentance, and so saved, let them be confounded with everlasting dishonour, and so ruined. They that turn the glory of God and his people into shame, God will turn their glory into shame.

14. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 15. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation all the day: for I know not the numbers thereof. 16. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. 17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not: until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. 19. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things, O God, who is like unto thee? 20. Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depth of the earth. 21. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. 22. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy one of Israel. 23. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee: and my soul which thou hast redeemed. 24. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

David is here in a holy transport of joy and praise, arising from his faith and hope in God; we have both together, *ver. 14. where there is a sudden and remarkable change of his voice, his fears are all silenced, his hopes raised, and his prayers turned into thanksgivings*. Let mine enemies say what they will to drive me to despair, *I will hope continually*, hope in all conditions, in the most cloudy and dark day: I will live upon hope, and will hope to the end. Since we hope in one that will never fail us, let not our hope in him fail us; and then we shall praise him yet more and more. The more they reproach me, the more closely will I cleave to thee; I will praise thee more and better than ever I have done yet. The longer we live the more expert we should grow in praising God, and the more we should abound in it. *I will add over and above all thy praise*, i. e. all the praise I have hitherto offered, for it is all too little: when we have said all we can to the glory of God's grace, there is still more to be said; it is a subject that can never be exhausted, and therefore we should never grow weary of it. Now observe in these verses,

1. How his heart is established in faith and hope, and it is a good thing that the heart be so established. Observe, (1.) What he hopes in, *ver. 16. (1.) In the power of God. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD*, not sit down in despair, but stir up myself to, and exert myself in, my work and warfare; will go forth and go on, not in any strength of my own, but in God's strength; disclaiming my own sufficiency, and depending on him only as all-sufficient; in the strength of his providence, and in the strength of his grace; we must always go about God's work in his strength, having our eyes up unto him to work in us both to will and to do. (2.) In the promise of God *I will make mention of thy righteousness*, i. e. thy faithfulness to every word which thou hast spoken, the equity of thy disposals, and thy kindness to thy people that trust in thee. This I will make mention of as my plea in prayer for thy mercy. We may very fitly apply it to the righteousness of Christ, which is called the *righteousness of God by faith*, and which is *attested by the law and the prophets*; we must depend upon God's strength for assistance, and upon Christ's righteousness for acceptance. *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24.

2. What he hopes for.

1. He hopes that God will not leave him in his old age, but will be the same to him to the end that he had been all along, *ver. 17, 18*. Observe here, (1.) What God had done for him when he was young. *Thou hast taught me from my youth*. The good education, and good instructions which his parents gave him when he was young, he owns himself obliged to give God thanks for, as a great favour. It is a blessed thing to be taught of God from our youth, from our childhood, to know the holy scriptures, and it is what we have reason to bless God for. (2.) What he had done for God when he was middle-aged, *He had declared all God's wondrous works*. Those that have got good when they are young, must be doing good when they are grown up, and must continue to communicate what they have received. We must own all the works of God's goodness to us are wondrous works, admiring he should do so much for us that are so undeserving, and we must make it our business to declare them to the glory of God, and the good of others. (3.) What he desired of God now he was old; *now I am old and grey-headed, dying to this world and hastening to another, O God, forsake me not*. This is what he earnestly desires, and confidently hopes for. Those that have been taught of God from their youth, and have made it the business of their lives to honour him, may be sure he will not leave them when they are old and grey-headed, will not leave them helpless and comfortless, but will make the evil days of old age their best days, and such as they shall have occasion to say they have pleasure in. (4.) What he designed to do for God in his old age. *I will shew my strength by thy own experience of it, not only to this generation, but I will leave my observations upon record for the benefit of posterity, and so shew it to every one that is to come*. As long as we live we should be endeavouring to glorify God and edify one another; and those that have had the largest and longest experience of the goodness of God to them, should improve their experiences for the good of their friends. It is a debt which the old disciples of Christ owe to the succeeding generations, to leave behind them a solemn testimony to the power, and pleasure, and advantage of religion, and the truth of God's promises.

(2.) He hopes that God would revive him, and raise him up out of his present low and disconsolate condition, *ver. 20. Thou which hast made me to see and feel great and sore troubles, above most men, shalt quicken me again*. Note, (1.) The best of God's saints and servants are sometimes exercised with great and sore troubles in this world. (2.) God's hand is to be eyed in all the troubles of the saints, and that will help to extenuate them, and make them seem light. He doth not say thou hast burdened me with those troubles, but shewed them me, as the tender father shews the child the rod to keep him in awe. (3.) Though God's people be brought never so low, he can revive them, and raise them up; are they dead? He can quicken them again: See 2 Cor. i. 9. Are they buried? as dead men out of mind? He can bring them up again from the depths of the earth, can cheer the most drooping spirit, and raise the most sinking interest. (4.) If we have a due regard to the hand of God in our troubles, we may promise ourselves in due time a deliverance out of them. Our present troubles though great and sore, shall be no hindrance to our joyful resurrection from the depth of the earth; witness our great Master, to whom this may have some reference, his Father shewed him great and sore troubles, but quickened him and brought him up from the grave.

(3.) He hopes that God would not only deliver him out of his troubles, but would advance his honour and joy more than ever, *ver. 21. Thou shalt not only restore me to my greatness again, but shalt increase it, and give me a better interest after the shock than before: thou shalt not only comfort me, but comfort me on every side*, so that I shall see nothing black or threatening on any side. Nay, sometimes God makes his people's troubles contribute to the increase of their greatness, and their sun shines the brighter for having been under a cloud. If he makes them contribute to the increase of their goodness, that will prove in the end the increase of their greatness, their glory; and if he comfort them on every side, according to the time and degree wherein he has afflicted them on every side, they will have no reason to complain. When our Lord Jesus was quickened again, and brought back from the depths of the earth, his greatness was increased, and he entered on the joy set before him.

(4.) He hopes that all his enemies would be put to confusion, *ver. 24. He speaks of it with the greatest assurance as a thing done, and triumphs in it accordingly; they are confounded, they are brought to shame that seek my hurt*. His honour would be their disgrace, and his comfort their vexation.

2. Let us now see how his heart is enlarged in joy and praises; how he rejoiceth in hope, and sings in hope, for we are saved by hope.

1. He will speak of God's righteousness and his salvation, as great things, things which he was well acquainted with, and much affected with, which he desired God might have the glory of, and others might have the comfortable knowledge of, *ver. 15. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation*; and again, *ver. 24. My tongue shall talk of thy righteousness, and this all the day*. God's righteousness, which David seems here to be in a particular manner affected with, includes a great deal: the rectitude of his nature; the equity of his providential disposals; the righteous laws which he hath given us to be ruled by; the righteous promises he has given us to depend upon; and the everlasting righteousness which his son hath brought in for our justification: God's righteousness and his salvation are here joined together, let no man think to put them asunder, nor expect salvation without righteousness, *Psal. l. 23*. If these two are made the objects of our desire, let them be made the subjects of our discourse all the day, for they are subjects that can never be drawn dry.

2. He will speak of them with wonder and admiration; as one astonished at the dimensions of divine love and grace, the height and depth, the length and breadth of it. *I know not the numbers thereof*, *ver. 15*. Though I cannot give a particular account of thy favours to me: they are so many, so great, if *I could count them they are more in number than the sand*, *Psal. xl. 5*. Yet knowing them to be numberless, I will be still speaking of them, for in them I shall find new matter, *ver. 19. The righteousness* that



that is in God is very high, that which is done by him for his people is very great; put both together, and we shall say, *O God, who is like unto thee?* This is praising God, acknowledging his perfections and performances to be, (1.) Above our conception; they are very high and great; so high that we cannot apprehend them; so great, that we cannot comprehend them. (2.) Without any parallel; no being like him, no works like his. *O God, who is like unto thee?* None in heaven, none on earth, no angel, no king; God is a non-such, as we do not rightly praise him, if we do not own him to be so.

3. He will speak of them with all the expressions of joy and exaltation, ver. 22, 23. Observe, (1.) How he would eye God in praising him. (1.) As a faithful God, *I will praise thee, even thy truth*; God is made known by his word, if we praise that, and the truth of that, we praise him. By faith we set to our seal that God is true; and so we praise his truth. (2.) As a God in covenant with him. *O my God whom have I consented to, and avouched for mine.* As in our prayers, so in our praises we must look up to God as our God, and give him the glory of our interest in him and relation to him. (3.) As the Holy One of Israel; Israel's God in a peculiar manner, glorious in his holiness among that people, and faithful to his covenant with them. It is God's honour that he is a Holy One; it is his people's honour that he is the Holy One of Israel. (2.) Observe how he will express his joy and exaltation, (1.) With his hand, in sacred music, with the psaltery, with the harp; at these David was an artist, and the best of his skill shall be employed in setting forth God's praises to such advantage as might affect others. (2.) With his lips, in sacred songs; *unto thee will I sing*, to thine honour, and with a desire to be accepted of thee; *My lips shall greatly rejoice, when I sing unto thee*, knowing they cannot be better employed. (3.) In both, with his heart, my soul shall rejoice *which thou hast redeemed*. Note, 1. Holy joy is the very heart and life of thankful praise. 2. We do not make melody to the Lord in singing his praises, if we do not do it with our hearts. My lips shall rejoice, but that is nothing; my labour, though never so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in serving God; the soul must be at work, and with all that is within us we must bless his holy name, else all about us is worth little. 3. Redeemed souls ought to be joyful thankful souls. The work of redemption ought above all God's works to be celebrated by us in our praises. The Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, must therefore be counted worthy of all blessing and praise.

P S A L M LXXII.

The foregoing psalm was penned by David when he was old, and, it should seem, so was this too; for Solomon was now standing fair for the crown; that was his prayer for himself, this for his son and successor, and with these two, the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended, as we find in the close of this psalm: *If we have but God's presence with us while we live, and good hopes concerning those that shall come after us, that they shall be praising God on earth when we are praising him in heaven, it is enough.* This is intitled a psalm for Solomon: it is probable, David dictated it, or rather it was by the blessed Spirit dictated to him, when, a little before he died, by divine direction, he settled the succession, and gave orders to proclaim Solomon king, 1 Kings i. 30. But though Solomon's name is here made use of, Christ's kingdom is here prophesied of under the type and figure of Solomon's. David knew what the divine oracle was, *That of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, Acts ii. 30.* And to him he here bears witness, and with the prospect of the glories of this kingdom he comforted himself in his dying moments, when he foresaw that his house would not be so with God, not so great, not so good, as he wished. David in spirit (1.) Begins with a short prayer for his successor, ver. 1. (2.) He passeth immediately into a long prediction, of the glories of his reign, ver. 2-17. And (3.) He concludes with praise to the God of Israel, ver. 18-20. In singing this psalm we must have an eye to Christ, praising him as a king, and pleasing ourselves with our happiness as his subjects.

A PSALM FOR SOLOMON.

1. **G**IVE the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

This verse is a prayer for the king, even the king's son.

1. We may apply it to Solomon, *Give him thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness*, make him a man, a king; make him a good man, a good king. (1.) It is the prayer of a father for his child; a dying blessing, such as the patriarchs bequeathed to their children; the best thing we can ask of God for our children is, that God will give them wisdom and grace to know and do their duty. That is better than gold: Solomon learned to pray for himself as his father had prayed for him, not that God would give him riches and honour, but a wife and understanding heart. It was a comfort to David that his own son was to be his successor; but more so, that he was likely to be both judicious and righteous. David had given him a good education, *Prov. ix. 3.* had taught him *good judgment and righteousness*, yet that would not do unless God gave him his judgments. Parents cannot give grace to their children, but may by prayer bring them to the God of grace, and shall not seek him in vain, for their prayer shall either be answered, or it shall return with comfort into their own bosom. (2.) It is the prayer of a king for his successor. David had executed judgment and justice during his reign, and now he prays that his son might do so too. Such a concern as this we should have for posterity, desiring and endeavouring that those who come after us may do God more and better service in their day than we have done in ours. Those have little love either to God or man, and are of a very narrow selfish spirit, who care not what becomes of the world and the church when they are gone. (3.) It is the prayer of subjects for their king. It should seem David penned this psalm for the use of the people, that they in singing might pray for Solomon. Those who would live quiet and peaceable lives must pray for kings and all in authority, that God would give them his judgments and righteousness.

2. We may apply it to Christ; not that he who intercedes for us needs us to intercede for him. But (1.) It is a prayer of the Old Testament church for founding the Messiah, as the church's king, king on the holy hill of Zion, of whom the king of kings had said, *Thou art my Son*, Psalm ii. 6, 7. Hasten his coming to whom all judgment is committed; and we must then hasten the second coming of Christ, when he shall judge the world in righteousness. (2.) It is an expression of the satisfaction which all true believers take in the authority which the Lord Jesus has received from the Father; let him have all power both in heaven and earth, and be the Lord our righteousness; let him be the great trustee of divine grace for all that are his; give it him, that he may give it us.

2. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. 3. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. 4. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. 5. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. 6. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. 7. In his days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 8. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. 9. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him: and his enemies shall lick the dust. 10. The kings of Tarshish, and of the isles, shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. 11. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. 12. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. 13. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. 14. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. 15. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. 16. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains: the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city, shall flourish like grass of the earth. 17. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.

This is a prophecy of the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ under the shadow of the reign of Solomon. It comes in, (1.) As a plea to enforce the prayer; *Lord, give him thy judgments and thy righteousness*, and then *he shall judge thy people with righteousness*, and so shall answer the end of his elevation, ver. 2. Give him thy grace and then thy people committed to his charge will have the benefit of it; *because God loved Israel, he made him king over them to do judgment and justice*, 2 Chron. ix. 8. We may in faith wrestle with God for that grace, which we have reason to think will be of common advantage to his church. (2.) As an answer of peace to the prayer. As by the prayer of faith we return answers to God's promises of mercy, so by the promises of mercy, God returns answers to our prayers of faith. That this prophecy must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah is plain, because there are many passages in it, which cannot be applied to the reign of Solomon. There was indeed a great deal of righteousness and peace at first in the administration of his government; but before the end of his reign, there was both trouble and unrighteousness. The kingdom here spoken of is to last as long as the sun, but Solomon's was soon extinct. Therefore even the Jewish expositors understand it of the kingdom of Messiah.

Let us observe the many great and precious promises here made, which were to have their full accomplishment only in the kingdom of Christ, and yet some of them were, in part fulfilled in Solomon's reign.

1. That it should be a righteous government, ver. 2. *He shall judge thy people with righteousness*. Compare *Ist. xi. 4*. All the laws of Christ's kingdom are consonant to the eternal rules of equity, the chambery it erects to relieve against the rigours of the broken law, is indeed a court of equity; and against the sentence of his last judgment there will be no exception. The peace of his kingdom shall be supported by righteousness, ver. 3. for then only is the place like a river, when *the righteousness is as the waves of the sea*. The world will be judged in righteousness, *Acts xvii. 31*.

2. That it should be a peaceable government; the mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills, ver. 3. *i. e.* (saith Dr. Hammond) both the superior and the inferior courts of judicature in Solomon's kingdom. There shall be abundance of peace, ver. 7. Solomon's name signifies peaceable, and such was his reign; for in it Israel enjoyed the victories of the foregoing reign, and preserved the tranquillity and repose of that reign. But peace is in a special manner the glory of Christ's kingdom, for as far as it prevails it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; for he is our peace.

3. That the poor and needy should be in a particular manner taken under the protection of this government: *He shall judge thy poor*, ver. 2. These are God's poor that are impoverished by keeping a good conscience, and those shall be provided for with a distinguishing care, shall be judged for with judgment, with a particular cognizance taken of their case, and a particular vengeance taken for their wrongs. The poor of the people, and the children of the needy, he will be sure to judge, as to save, ver. 4. This is insisted upon again, ver. 12, 13, intimating that Christ will be sure to carry his cause on behalf of his injured poor. He will deliver the needy that lie at the mercy of their oppressors, the poor all, both because they have no no helper, and it is for his honour to help them; and because they cry unto him, and he has promised in answer to their prayers to help them; they by prayer commit themselves unto him, Psalm x. 14. He will spare the needy that throw themselves on his mercy, and will not be rigorous and severe with them, he will save their souls, and that is all they desire; *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. Christ is the poor man's king.

4. That proud oppressors shall be reckoned with; he shall break them in pieces, ver. 4. shall take away their power to hurt, and punish them for all the mischief they have done; This is the office of the good king, *Parvo subjeclis & debellare superbos*. The devil is the great oppressor whom Christ will break in pieces, and of whose kingdom he will be the destruction; *with the breath of his mouth he shall slay that wicked one*, *Ist. xi. 4*. and shall deliver the souls of his people from deceit and violence, ver. 14. He shall save them from the power of Satan, both as an old serpent working by deceit to ensnare them, and as a roaring lion working by violence to terrify and devour them. Thus precious shall their blood be unto him, that not a drop of it shall be shed by the deceit of the violence of Satan or his instruments; but it shall be reckoned for. Christ is a king, who, though he calls his subjects sometimes to resist unto blood for him, yet is not prodigal of their blood.



blood, nor will ever have it parted with, but upon a valuable consideration to his glory and theirs, and to the filling up of the measure of their iniquity.

5. That religion shall flourish under Christ's government, *ver. 5.* *They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure.* Solomon indeed built the temple, and the fear and worship of God was well kept up for some time under his government, but it did not last long, this therefore must point at Christ's kingdom, all the subjects of which are brought to, and kept in, the fear of God; for the christian religion has a direct tendency to, and a powerful influence upon, the support and advancement of natural religion. Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up, the fear of God; and therefore this is the everlasting gospel that is preached, *Fear God, and give honour to him,* Rev. xiv. 7. And as Christ's government promotes devotion towards God, so it promotes both justice and charity among men, *ver. 7.* *In his days shall the righteous flourish;* righteousness shall be practised, and those that practise righteousness shall be preferred. Righteousness shall abound and be in reputation, shall command and be in power. The law of Christ written in the heart, disposeth men to be honest and just, and to render to all their due; it likewise disposeth men to live in love; and so it produceth abundance of peace, and beats swords into ploughshares. Both holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom, and shall never go to decay, for the subjects of it shall *fear God as long as the sun and moon endure, i. e.* christianity in the profession of it, having got footing in the world, shall keep its ground till the end of time, and having in the power of it got footing in the heart, it will continue there till by death, the sun and the moon, and the stars, *i. e.* the bodily senses are darkened. Through all the changes of the world, and all the changes of life, Christ's kingdom will support itself; and if the fear of God continues as long as the sun and moon, abundance of peace will. The peace of the church, the peace of the soul, shall run parallel with its purity and piety, and last as long as these last.

6. That Christ's government shall be very comfortable to all his faithful loving subjects, *ver. 6.* *He shall, by the graces and comforts of his spirit, come down like rain upon the mown grass;* not on that which is cut down, but that which is left growing, that it may spring again, though it was beheaded. The gospel of Christ diffuses as the rain, which softens the ground that was hard, moistens that which was dry, and so makes it green and fruitful. *Ipsa.* iv. 10. Let our hearts drink in the rain, Heb. vi. 7.

7. That Christ's kingdom shall be extended very far, and greatly enlarged; considering, (1.) The extent of his territories, *ver. 8.* *He shall have dominion from sea to sea,* from the south sea to the north, or from the Red sea to the Mediterranean; and from the river Euphrates or Nile, to the ends of the earth. Solomon's dominion was very large, 1 Kings iv. 21. according to the promise, *Gen. xv. 18.* But no sea, no river is named, that it might, by these proverbial expressions, speak the universal monarchy of the Lord Jesus. His gospel has been, or shall be, preached to all nations, *Matt. xxiv. 14.* and the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms, *Rev. xi. 15.* when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. His territories shall be extended to those countries, (1.) That were strangers to him. *They that dwell in the wilderness,* out of all high roads, that seldom hear news, yet shall hear the glad tidings of the Redeemer, and redemption by him, *shall bow before him, i. e.* shall believe in him, accept of him, worship him, and take his yoke upon them. Before the Lord Jesus we must all either bow or break; if we break, we are ruined; if we bow, we are certainly made for ever. (2.) That were enemies to him, and had fought against him, *they shall lick the dust, i. e.* they shall be brought down and laid in the dust, shall bite the ground for vexation, and be so hunger-bitten that they shall be glad of dust, the serpent's meat, *Gen. iii. 15.* for of his seed they are; and over whom shall not he rule, when his enemies themselves are thus humbled and brought low! (2.) The dignity of his tributaries; he shall not only reign over them that dwell in the wilderness, the peasants and cottagers, but over them that dwell in the palaces, *ver. 10.* *The kings of Turshish and of the isles,* that lie most remote from Israel, and are the isles of the Gentiles, *Gen. ix. 5.* these shall bring presents to him as their sovereign lord, by and under whom they hold their crowns, and all their crown-lands. They shall court his favour, and make an interest in him, that they may hear his wisdom. This was literally fulfilled in Solomon: for all the kings of the earth sought the wisdom of Solomon, and brought every man his present, 2 Chron. ix. 23, 24. and in Christ too, when the wise men of the east, who probably were men of the first rank in their own country, came to worship him, and brought him presents, *Matt. ii. 11.* They shall present themselves to him, that is the best present we can bring to Christ, and without that no other present is acceptable, *Rom. xii. 1.* *They shall offer gifts, i. e.* spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, offer them to Christ as their God, on Christ, as their altar, which sanctifies every gift. Their conversion to God is called the offering up, or *sacrificing of the Gentiles,* *Rom. xv. 16.* And so is their devotion to God, *Heb. xiii. 15, 16.* Yea, all kings shall sooner or later fall down before him, either to do their duty to him, or to receive their doom from him, *ver. 11.* They shall fall before him, either as his willing subjects, or as his conquered captives; as supplicants for his mercy, or expectants of his judgment. And when the kings submit, the people come in of course, *all nations shall serve him;* all shall be invited into his service; some of all nations shall come into it, and in every nation, *incense shall be offered to him, and a pure offering,* *Mal. i. 11.* *Rev. vii. 9.*

8. That he shall be honoured and beloved by all his subjects, *ver. 15.* *He shall live,* his subjects shall desire his life, *O king, live for ever,* and with good reason; for he hath said, *because I live, you shall live also;* and of him it is witnessed, *that he liveth, ever liveth making intercession,* *Heb. vii. 8.* 25. He shall live, and live prosperously: And, (1.) Presents shall be made to him. Though he shall be able to live without them, for he needs neither the gifts, nor the services of any; yet to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; gold, the best of metal, gold of Sheba, which, probably, was the finest gold; for he that is best, must be served with the best. They that have abundance of the wealth of this world, that have gold at command, must give it to Christ, *i. e.* must serve him with it, do good with it; *honour the Lord with thy substance.* (2.) Prayers shall be made for him, and that continually. The people prayed for Solomon, and that helped to make him and his reign so great a blessing to them. It is the duty of subjects to make prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for kings and all in authority; not in compliment to them, as it is too often done, but in concern for the public welfare. But how is this applied to Christ? He needs not our prayers, nor can have any benefit by them: But the Old Testament saints prayed for his coming, prayed continually for it; for they called him, *He that should come.* And now he is come, we must pray for the success of his gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom, which he calls praying for him, *Hosannah to the son of David,* prosperity to his reign; and we pray for his second coming. It may be read, *prayer shall be made through him, or for his sake, i. e.* whatsoever we ask of the Father shall be in his name, and in dependence upon his intercession. (3.) Praises shall be made of him, and high encomiums given of his wisdom, justice, and goodness, daily shall he be praised. By praying daily in his name, we give him honour. Subjects ought to speak well of the government that is a blessing to

them; and much more ought all christians to praise Jesus Christ, daily to praise him; for they owe their all to him, and to him they lie under the highest obligations.

9. That under his government there shall be a wonderful increase both of meat and months, both of the fruits of the earth in the country, and of the people inhabiting the cities, *ver. 13.* (1.) The country shall grow rich; sow but a handful of corn on the top of the mountains, whence one would expect but little, and yet the fruit of it shall shake like Lebanon: it shall come up like a wood, so thick, and tall, and strong, like the cedars of Lebanon. Even upon the tops of the mountains, the earth shall bring forth by handfuls; that is an expression of great plenty, *Gen. xli. 47.* as the grass upon the house-top is said to be that wherewith the mower filled not his hand. This is applicable to the wonderful products of the seed of the gospel in the days of the Messiah: A handful of that seed sown in the mountainous and barren soil of the Gentile world, produced a wonderful harvest gathered into Christ, fruit that shook like Lebanon: The fields were white to the harvest, *John iv. 35.* *Matt. ix. 37.* The grain of mustard-seed grew up to a great tree. (2.) The towns shall grow populous; *They of the city shall flourish like grass,* for number, for verdure. The gospel-church, the city of God among men, shall have all the marks of prosperity, many shall be added to it, and those that are shall be happy in it.

10. That his government shall be perpetual, both to his honour, and to the happiness of his subjects. The Lord Jesus shall reign for ever, and of him only this must be understood, and not at all of Solomon. It is Christ only that shall be feared throughout all generations, *ver. 5.* and as long as the sun and moon endure, *ver. 7.* (1.) The honour of the prince is immortal, and shall never be sullied, *ver. 17.* *his name shall endure for ever,* in despite of all the malicious attempts and endeavours of the powers of darkness to eclipse the lustre of it, and to cut off the line of it: it shall be preserved, it shall be perpetuated, and in a manner propagated: As the name of earthly princes are continued in their posterity, so Christ is in himself, *filialiter nomen ejus,* all nations while the world stands, shall call him blessed; shall bless God for him, and continually think well of him, and think themselves happy in him. To the end of time, and to eternity, his name shall be celebrated, shall be made use of; every tongue shall confess it, and every knee shall bow before it. (2.) The happiness of the people is universal too, it is complete and everlasting; men shall be blessed, truly and for ever blessed in him. This plainly refers to the promise made unto the fathers, that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth should be blessed, *Gen. xii. 2.*

18. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. 19. And blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and amen. 20. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Such an illustrious prophecy as in the foregoing verses of the Messiah and his kingdom, may fitly be concluded, as it is here, with hearty prayers and praises.

1. The psalmist is here enlarged in thanksgivings for the prophecy and promise, *ver. 18, 19.* So sure is every word of God, and with so much satisfaction may we rely upon it, that we have reason enough to give thanks for what he hath said, though it be not yet done. We must own, that for all the great things he has done for the world, for the church, for the children of men, for his own children, in the kingdom of providence, in the kingdom of grace; for all the power and trust lodged in the hands of the Redeemer, God is worthy to be praised, we must stir up our lives and all that is within us to praise him after the best manner, and desire that all others may do it. *Blessed be the Lord,* that is, *blessed be his glorious name;* for it is only in his name, that we can contribute any thing to his glory and blessedness, and yet that is also *exalted above all blessing and praise.* Let it be blessed for ever, it shall be blessed for ever, it deserves to be blessed for ever, and we hope to be for ever blessing it. We are here taught to bless the name of Christ, and to bless God in Christ for all that which he has done for us by him. We must bless him, (1.) As the Lord God, as the self-existent, self-sufficient being, and our sovereign Lord, (2.) As the God of Israel, in covenant with that people, and worshipped by them, and who doth this in performance of the truth unto Jacob and the mercy to Abraham. (3.) As the God who only doth wondrous things, in creation and providence, and especially this work of redemption, which excelled them all; mens works are little common trifling things, and which without him they could not do. But God doth all by his own power, and they are wondrous things which he doth, and such as will be the eternal admiration of saints and angels.

2. He is earnest in prayer for the accomplishment of this prophecy, and promise; *let the whole earth be filled with his glory;* as it will be when the kings of Turshish, and the isles, shall bring presents to him. It is sad to think how empty the earth is of the glory of God, how little service and honour he has from a world to which he is such a bountiful benefactor: And therefore all that wish well to the honour of God, and the welfare of mankind, cannot but desire that the earth may be filled with the discoveries of his glory, suitably returned in thankful acknowledgements of his glory. Let every heart, and every mouth, and every assembly be filled with the high praises of God. We shall see how earnest David is in this prayer, and how much his heart is in it, if we observe, (1.) How he shuts up the prayer, with a double seal, *Amen and amen,* again and again I say, I say it, and let all others say the same, so be it: Amen to my prayer; amen to the prayers of all the saints to this purpose; *Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.* (2.) How he even shuts up his life with this prayer, *ver. 23.* This was the last psalm that ever he penned; though not placed last in this collection, he penned it when he lay on his death-bed, and with this he breathes his last; let God be glorified; let the kingdom of the Messiah be set up, and kept up in the world, and I have enough, I desire no more: With this let the prayers of David the son of Jesse be ended, even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

# P S A L M LXXIII.

This psalm and the ten that next follow it, carry the name of Asaph in the titles of them; if he was the penman of them (as many think) we rightly call them psalms of Asaph: If he was only the chief musician, to whom they were delivered, our marginal reading is right, which calls them psalms for Asaph. It is probable he penned them; for we read of the words of David, and of Asaph the seer, which were used in praising God in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. Though the spirit of prophecy by sacred songs descended chiefly on David, who is therefore styled the sweet psalmist of Israel; yet God put some of that Spirit upon those about him. This is a psalm of great use, it gives us an account



of the conflict which the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. He begins his account with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and by the help of which he kept his ground, and carried his point, ver. 1. And then tells us, (1.) How he got into the temptation, ver. 2—14. (2.) How he got out of the temptation, and gained a victory over it, ver. 15—20. (3.) How he got by the temptation, and was the better for it, ver. 21—28. And if in singing this psalm we fortify ourselves against the like temptation, we do not use it in vain. The experiences of others should be our instruction.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. **TRULY** God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. 2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well-nigh slipped. 3. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. 5. They are not in trouble as other men: neither are they plagued like other men. 6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment. 7. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. 8. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. 9. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. 10. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. 11. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? 12. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. 13. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. 14. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

The psalm begins somewhat abruptly, yet God is good to Israel, to the margin reads it; he had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked, and while he was thus musing the fire burned, and at last he spake by way of check to himself for what he had been thinking of, however it be, yet God is good. Though wicked people receive many of the gifts of his providential bounty, yet we must own, that he is in a peculiar manner good to Israel, they have favours from him which others have not.

The psalmist designs an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with to envy the prosperity of the wicked; a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many of the saints. Now in this account,

1. He lays down in the first place that great principle which he is resolved to abide by, and not to quit while he was parleying this temptation, ver. 1. Job when he was entering into such a temptation, fixed for his principle, the omniscience of God, *times are not hidden from the Almighty*, Job xxiv. 1. Jeremiah's principle is the justice of God, *Righteous art thou, O God, when I plead with thee*, Jer. xii. 1. Habakkuk's principle is the holiness of God, *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, Hab. i. 13. The psalmist's here is the goodness of God, these are truths which cannot be shaken, and which we must resolve to live and die by. Though we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of providence with them, we must believe they are reconcilable. Note, Good thoughts of God will fortify us against many of Satan's temptations. Truly God is good; he had had many thoughts in his mind concerning the providence of God, but this word at last settled him, for all this God is good, good to Israel, even to them that are of a clean heart. Note, 1. Those are the Israel of God that are of a clean heart, purified by the blood of Christ, cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God. An upright heart is a clean heart; cleanness is truth in the inward part. 2. God, who is good to all, is in a special manner good to his church and people, as he was to Israel of old. God was good to Israel in redeeming them out of Egypt, taking them into covenant with himself, giving them his laws and ordinances, and in the various providences that were concerning them; and he is in like manner good to all them that are of a clean heart, and whatever happens we must not think otherwise.

2. He comes now to relate the shock that was given to his faith, in God's distinguishing goodness to Israel, by a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and therefore to think that the Israel of God are no happier than other people, and that God is no kinder to them than to others. He speaks of it as a very fair escape, that he had not been quite foiled and overthrown by this temptation, ver. 2. But as for me, though I was so well satisfied in the goodness of God to Israel, yet my feet were almost gone, the tempter had almost tripped up my heels, my steps had well-nigh slipped, I had like to have quitted my religion, and given up all my expectations of benefit by it, for I was envious at the foolish. Note, 1. The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken, and ready to fall them. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors. 2. Those that shall never be quite undone, are sometimes very near it, and in their own apprehension as good as gone. Many a precious soul that shall live for ever, had once a very narrow turn for its life; almost and well-nigh ruined, but a step between it and a fatal apostacy, and yet snatched as a brand out of the burning, which will for ever magnify the riches of divine grace, in the nations of them that are saved.

Now let us take notice of the process of the psalmist's temptation, what he was tempted with, and tempted to.

1. He observed that foolish wicked people have oftentimes a very great share of outward prosperity. He says with grief, *the prosperity of the wicked*, ver. 3. Wicked people are really foolish people, and act against reason and their true interest, and yet every slanderer by sees their prosperity.

(1.) They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life, ver. 5. *They are not in the troubles of other men*, even of wife and good men, *neither are they plagued like other men*, but seem as if by some special privilege, they were exempted from the common lot of sorrows. If they meet with some little trouble, it is nothing to what others endure, that are less sinners, and yet greater sufferers.

(2.) They seem to have the greatest share of the comforts of this life. They live at ease, and bathe themselves in pleasures, so that *their eyes stand out with fatness*, ver. 7. See what the excess of pleasure is; the moderate use of it enlargeth the eyes, but they that indulge themselves in ordi-

nately in the delights of sense, have their eyes ready to start out of their heads. Epicures are really their own tormentors, by putting a force upon nature, while they pretend to gratify it. And well may they feed themselves to the full who have more than heart can wish, more than they themselves ever thought of, or expected to be masters of. They have at least more than an humble, quiet, contented heart could wish, yet not so much as they themselves wish for. There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands, but nothing of the other life in their hearts. They are ungodly, live without the fear and worship of God, and yet they prosper and come on in the world, and not only are rich, but increase in riches, ver. 12. They are looked upon as thriving men, and while others have much ado to keep what they have, they are still adding more, more honour, power, pleasure, by increasing in riches. *They are the prosperous of the age*, so some read it.

(3.) (Which is most strange of all, and therefore is first mentioned.) Their end seems to be peace; this was ever thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly, *Psal. xxxvii. 37.* and yet to outward appearance, it is oftentimes the lot of the ungodly, ver. 4. *There are no bands in their death.* They are not taken off by a violent death, they are foolish, and yet die not as fools die; *for their hands are not bound, nor their feet put into fetters*, 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34. They are not taken off by an untimely death, like the fruit forced from the tree before it is ripe, but are left to hang on till, through old age, they gently drop of themselves. They do not die of sore and painful diseases, there are no pangs, no agonies in their death, but their strength is firm to the last, so that they scarce feel themselves die: They are of those who *die in their full strength; being wholly at ease and quiet*; not of those that *die in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat with pleasure*, Job xxi. 23—25. Nay they are not bound by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments, they are not frightened even with the remembrance of their sins, or the prospect of their misery: but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death, either by the manner of their death, or the frame of their spirits in dying. Men may die like lambs, and yet have their place with the goats.

2. He observed that they made a very ill use of their outward prosperity, and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to grudge at it. If it had done them any good, if it had made them less provoking to God, or less oppressive to man, it would never have vexed; but it had a quite contrary effect upon them.

(1.) It made them very proud and haughty, because they live at ease; *Pride compasseth them as a chain*, ver. 6. They shew themselves to all that see them to be puffed up with their prosperity, as men shew their ornaments: *The pride of Israel testifies to his face*, 110. v. 5. 112. iii. 9. *Pride lies on their chain, or necklace*; so Dr. Hammond reads it. It is no harm to wear a chain, or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceaseth to be an ornament. It is not so much what the dress or apparel is, (though we have rules for that, 1 Tim. ii. 9.) as what principle ties it on, and with what spirit it is worn. And as the pride of sinners appears in their dress, so it doth in their talk; *they speak loftily*, ver. 8. They affect great swelling words of vanity, 2 Pet. ii. 18. bragging of themselves, and disdain all about them. Out of the abundance of the pride that is in their heart they speak big.

(2.) It made them oppressive to their poor neighbours, ver. 6. *Violence covereth them as a garment.* What they have got by fraud and oppression, they keep and increase by the same wicked methods, and care not what injury they do to others, nor what violence they use, so they may but enrich and aggrandize themselves. *They are corrupt*, like the giants, the sinners of the old world, *when the earth was filled with violence*, Gen. vi. 11—13. They care not what mischief they do, either for mischief sake, or for their own advantage sake: they speak wickedly concerning oppression, they oppress and justify themselves in it; they that speak well of sin, speak wickedly of it. They are corrupt, that is dissipated in pleasures, and every thing that is luxurious, (so some) and inordinately deride and speak maliciously, they care not whom they wound with the poisoned darts of calumny from on high they seek oppression.

(3.) It made them very insolent in their carriage, both towards God and man, ver. 9. *They set their mouth against the heavens*; putting contempt upon God himself and his honour, bidding defiance to him and his power and justice; they cannot reach the heavens with their hands to shake God's throne, else they would; but they shew their ill-will by setting their mouth against the heavens. Their tongue also walks through the earth, and they take liberty to abuse all that come in their way. No man's greatness or goodness can secure him from the scourge of the virulent tongue; they take a pride and pleasure in bantering all mankind: they are pests of the country, for they neither fear God nor regard man.

(4.) In all this they were very atheistical and profane. They could not have been thus wicked, if they had not learned to say, ver. 11. *How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?* So far were they from desiring the knowledge of God, who gave them all the good things they had, and would have taught them to use them well, that they were not willing to believe God had any knowledge of them, that he took any notice of their wickedness, or would ever call them to an account. As if because he is most high, he could not, or would not see them, Job xxii. 12. Whereas because he is most high, therefore he can and will take cognizance of all the children of men, and of all they do, or say, or think. What an affront is it to the God of infinite knowledge, from whom all knowledge is, to ask, *Is there knowledge in him?* Well may he say, ver. 12. *Behold these are the ungodly.*

3. He observed that while wicked men thus prospered in their impiety, and were made more impious by their prosperity, good people were in great affliction, and he himself in particular, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to quarrel with providence.

(1.) He looked abroad, and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss, ver. 10. Because the wicked are so very daring, therefore his people return hither, i. e. they are at the same pause, the same plunge that I am at; they know not what to say to it no more than I do, and the rather because waters of a full cup are wrung out of them; they are not only made to drink, and to drink deep of the bitter cup of affliction, but to drink all; care is taken that they lose not a drop of that unpleasant portion, the waters are wrung out unto them; that they may have the dregs of the cup. They pour out abundance of tears when they hear wicked people blaspheme God, and speak profanely, as David did, *Psal. cxix. 136.* These are the waters wrung out to them.

(2.) He looked at home, and felt himself under the continual frowns of providence; while the wicked were sunning themselves in its smiles, ver. 14. For my part, saith he, *All the day long have I been plagued with one affliction or another, and chastened every morning*, as duly as the morning comes. His afflictions were great, he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, every morning with the morning, and they continued without intermission, all the day long. This he thought was very hard, that when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he that worshipped God was under such great affliction. He spoke feelingly when



when he spoke of his own troubles, no disputing against sense, except by faith.

4. From all this arose a very strong temptation to cast off his religion. (1.) Some that observed the prosperity of the wicked, especially comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a providence, and to think that God had forsaken the earth. In this sense some take, *ver. 11.* There are those, even among God's professing people, that say, How doth God know? Sure all things are left to blind fortune, and not disposed of by an all-seeing God. Some of the heathen upon such a remark as this, have asked, *Quis putet esse Deos?* (2.) Though the psalmist's feet were not thus far gone, as to question God's omniscience; yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, and to say, *ver. 13.* *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain,* and have to no purpose washed my hands in innocency. See here what it is to be religious, it is to cleanse our hearts in the first place, by repentance and regeneration, and then to wash our hands in innocency by an universal reformation of our lives. It is not in vain to do this; not in vain to serve God and keep his ordinances; but good men have been sometimes tempted to say, it is in vain, and that religion is a thing that there is nothing to be got by, because they see wicked people in prosperity. But however the thing may appear now, when the pure in heart, those blessed ones, shall see God, *Matth. v. 8.* they will not say that they have cleansed their hearts in vain.

15. If I say, I will speak thus: behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. 16. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. 18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors. 20. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O LORD, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

We have seen what a strong temptation the psalmist was in to envy profane profaneness; now here we are told how he kept footing, and got the victory.

1. He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, *ver. 15.* he got the victory by degrees; and this was the first point he gained, he was ready to say, *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain:* And though he had reason to say it, but he kept his mouth with this consideration. *If I say, I will speak thus: behold, I should myself revolt and apostatise from, and so give the greatest offence imaginable, to the generation of thy children.* Observe here, (1.) Though he thought amiss, he took care not to utter that evil thought which he had conceived. Note. It is bad to think ill, but it is worse to speak it, for that is giving the evil thought an imprimatur; it is allowing it, giving consent to it, and publishing it for the infection of others: But it is a good sign we repent of the evil imagination of the heart, if we suppress it, and the error remaineth with ourselves. If therefore thou hast been so foolish as to think evil, be so wise as to lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and let it go no farther, *Prov. xxx. 32.* *If I say, I will speak thus.* Observe, Though his corrupt heart made this inference from the prosperity of the wicked, yet he did not mention it to those about him, till he had debated within himself, whether it was fit to be mentioned or no. Note. We must think twice before we speak once; both because some things may be thought, which yet may not be spoken, and because the second thoughts may correct the mistakes of the first. (2.) The reason why he would not speak it, was for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. Note, 1. There is a people in the world that are the generation of God's children, a set of men that hear and love God as their father. (2.) We must be very careful not to say or to do any thing which may justly offend any of these little ones, *Matth. xviii. 6.* especially that may offend the generation of them, may sadden their hearts, or weaken their hands, or shake their interest. (3.) There is nothing that can give more general offence to the generation of God's children, than to say that we have cleansed our heart in vain, or that it is in vain to serve God, for there is nothing more contrary to their universal sentiment and experience, nor any thing that grieves them more than to hear God thus reflected on. (4.) Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked, do in effect quit the tents of God's children.

2. He foresaw the ruin of wicked people; and by this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it. Because he durst not speak what he had thought, for fear of giving offence, he began to consider whether he had any good reason for that thought, *ver. 16.* I endeavoured to understand the meaning of this unaccountable dispensation of providence; but it was too painful for me, I could not conquer it by the strength of my own reasoning; it is a problem, not to be solved by the mere light of nature, for if there were not another life after this, we could not fully reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the justice of God; but, *ver. 17.* He went into the sanctuary of God, he applied himself to his devotions, meditated upon the attributes of God, and the things revealed, which belong to us and to our children; he consulted the scriptures, and the priests lips who attend the sanctuary; he prayed to God to make this matter plain to him, and to help him over this difficulty; and at length he understood the wretched end of wicked people, which he plainly foresaw to be such, that even in the height of their prosperity, they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin. Note, 1. There are many great things, and needful to be known, which will not be known otherwise than by going into the sanctuary of God, by the word and prayer. That therefore must be the resort of a tempted soul. (2.) We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgment; particularly we must judge by the end; all is well that ends well, everlasting well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlasting ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable.

1. The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain; the high places in which providence sets them are slippery places, *ver. 18.* where they cannot long keep footing, but when they offer to climb higher, that very attempt will be the occasion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm ground, it is not built upon God's favour, or his promise; and they have not the satisfaction of feeling any firm ground it has.

2. Their destruction is sure and sudden, and very great. This cannot be meant of any temporal destruction; for they were supposed to spend all their days in wealth, and their death itself had no hands in it, in a moment they go down to the grave, so that even that could scarce be called their destruction; it must therefore be meant of eternal destruction on the other side

death; hell and destruction. They flourish for a time, but are undone for ever. (1.) Their ruin is sure and inevitable; he speaks of it as a thing done, they are cast down, for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted: *Thou castest them down.* It is destruction from the Almighty, *Joel i. 15.* from the glory of his power, *2 Thess. i. 9.* Who can support those whom God will cast down, whom God will lay load upon? (2.) It is swift and sudden; their damnation slumbers not; for how are they brought into desolation as in a moment? *ver. 19.* It is easily effected, and will be a mighty surprise to themselves and all about them. (3.) It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total, final ruin, they are utterly consumed with terrors. It is the misery of the damned, that the terrors of the Almighty, whom they have made their enemy; fasten upon their godly consciences, which can neither shelter themselves from them, nor strengthen themselves under them; and therefore not their being, but their bliss must needs be utterly consumed by them; not the least degree of comfort or hope remains to them; the higher they were lifted up in their prosperity, the lower will their fall be when they are cast down into destructions, (for the word is plural) and suddenly brought into desolation.

3. Their prosperity is therefore not to be envied at all, but despised rather: *quod erat demonstrandum, ver. 20.* As a dream when one awaketh, so O LORD, when thou awakest, or when they awake (as some read it) thou shalt despise their image, their shadow, and make it to vanish. In the day of the great judgment (so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it) when they are awaked out of their graves, thou shalt in wrath despise their image; for they shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt. See here, (1.) What their prosperity now is, it is but an image, a vain shew, a fashion of the world that passeth away; it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a mere shadow; not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream, which may please us a little while we are asleep, yet even then it disturbs our repose; but how pleasing soever it is, it is all but a cheat, all false, when we awake we find it so: A hungry man dreams that he eats, but he wakes, and his soul is empty, *Isa. xxix. 8.* A man is never the more rich or honourable for dreaming he is so: Who therefore will envy a man the pleasure of a dream? (2.) What will be the issue of it: God will awake to judgment, to plead his own and his people's injured cause; they shall be made to awake out of the sleep of their carnal security, and then God shall despise their image, *i. e.* He shall make it appear to all the world how despicable it is; so that the righteous shall laugh at them, *Psal. lii. 6, 7.* How did God despise that rich man's image, when he said, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee,* *Luke xii. 19, 20.* We ought to be of God's mind, for his judgment is according to truth; and not to admire and envy that which he despiseth and will despise; for sooner or later he will bring all the world to be of one mind.

21. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. 22. So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee. 23. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. 24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. 26. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 27. For lo, they that are far from thee, shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Behold Samson's riddle again unriddled, *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness;* for we have here an account of the good improvement which the psalmist made of that fore temptation with which he had been assaulted, and by which he was almost overcome. He that stumbles and doth not fall, by recovering himself takes so much the longer steps forwards: It was so with the psalmist here; divers good lessons he learned from his temptation, he struggles with it, and his victories over it. Nor should God suffer his people to be tempted, if his grace was not sufficient for them, nor only to save them harmless but to make them gainers by it; even this shall work for good.

1. He learned to think very humbly of himself, and to abase and accuse himself before God, *ver. 21, 22.* He reflects with shame upon the disorder and danger he was in, and the vexation he gave himself by entertaining the temptation, and parleying with it, *My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins,* as one afflicted with the acute pain of the stone in the region of the kidneys. If ill thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he doth not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but they are grievous and painful to him; temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, *2 Cor. xii. 7.* This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any other; where it constantly rests, it is the rottenness of the bones, *Prov. xiv. 30.* where it doth but occasionally come, it is the pricking of the reins. Fretfulness is a corruption that is its own correction.

Now in the reflection upon it, (1.) He owns it was his folly thus to vex himself; so foolish was I to be my own tormentor. Let peevish people thus reproach themselves for, and shame themselves out of their discontents; what a fool am I thus to make myself uneasy without a cause? (2.) He owns it was his ignorance to vex himself at this; so ignorant of that which I might have known, and which if I had known it aright, would have been sufficient to have silenced the fret. I was as a beast, Behemoth, a great beast, before thee: Beasts mind present things only, and never look before at what is to come; and so did I. If I had not been a great fool, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to have prevailed over me so far: What! to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity; to be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them! so foolish was I. Note, If good men do at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act amiss, when they see their error they will reflect upon it with sorrow and shame and self-abhorrence; will call themselves fools for it, *Surely I am more brutish than any man,* *Prov. xxx. 2.* *Job xlii. 5, 6.* Thus David, *2 Sam. xxiv. 10.*

2. He took occasion from hence to own his dependence and obligations to the grace of God, *ver. 23.* Nevertheless, as foolish as I am, I am continually with thee and in thy favour, thou hast holden me by my right hand. This may refer either, (1.) To the care God had taken of him, and the kindness he had shewed him all along from his beginning hitherto. He had said in the hour of temptation, *ver. 14.* *All the day long have I been plagued;* but here



of the conflict which the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. He begins his account with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and by the help of which he kept his ground, and carried his point, ver. 1. And then tells us, (1.) How he got into the temptation, ver. 2—14. (2.) How he got out of the temptation, and gained a victory over it, ver. 15—20. (3.) How he got by the temptation, and was the better for it, ver. 21—28. And if in singing this psalm we fortify ourselves against the like temptation, we do not use it in vain. The experiences of others should be our instruction.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. **T**RULY God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. 2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone: my steps had well-nigh slipped. 3. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. 5. They are not in trouble as other men: neither are they plagued like other men. 6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment. 7. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. 8. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. 9. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. 10. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. 11. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? 12. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. 13. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. 14. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

The psalm begins somewhat abruptly, yet God is good to Israel, to the margin reads it; he had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked, and while he was thus musing the fire burned, and at last he spoke by way of check to himself for what he had been thinking of, however it be, yet God is good. Though wicked people receive many of the gifts of his providential bounty, yet we must own, that he is in a peculiar manner good to Israel, they have favours from him which others have not.

The psalmist designs an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with to envy the prosperity of the wicked; a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many of the saints. Now in this account,

1. He lays down in the first place that great principle which he is resolved to abide by, and not to quit while he was parleying this temptation, ver. 1. Job when he was entering into such a temptation, fixed for his principle, the omniscience of God, *times are not hidden from the Almighty*, Job xxiv. 1. Jeremiah's principle is the justice of God, *Righteous art thou, O God, when I plead with thee*, Jer. xii. 1. Habakkuk's principle is the holiness of God, *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, Hab. i. 13. The psalmist's here is the goodness of God, these are truths which cannot be shaken, and which we must resolve to live and die by. Though we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of providence with them, we must believe they are reconcilable. Note, Good thoughts of God will fortify us against many of Satan's temptations. Truly God is good; he had had many thoughts in his mind concerning the providence of God, but this word at last settled him, for all this God is good, good to Israel, even to them that are of a clean heart. Note, 1. These are the Israel of God that are of a clean heart, purified by the blood of Christ, cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God. An upright heart is a clean heart; cleanness is truth in the inward part. 2. God, who is good to all, is in a special manner good to his church and people, as he was to Israel of old. God was good to Israel in redeeming them out of Egypt, taking them into covenant with himself, giving them his laws and ordinances, and in the various providences that were concerning them; and he is in like manner good to all them that are of a clean heart, and whatever happens we must not think otherwise.

2. He comes now to relate the shock that was given to his faith, in God's distinguishing goodness to Israel, by a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and therefore to think that the Israel of God are no happier than other people, and that God is no kinder to them than to others. He speaks of it as a very fair escape, that he had not been quite foiled and overthrown by this temptation, ver. 2. But as for me, though I was so well satisfied in the goodness of God to Israel, yet my feet were almost gone, the tempter had almost tripped up my heels, my steps had well-nigh slipped, I had like to have quitted my religion, and given up all my expectations of benefit by it, for I was envious at the foolish. Note, 1. The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken, and ready to fall them. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors. 2. Those that shall never be quite undone, are sometimes very near it, and in their own apprehension as good as gone. Many a precious soul that shall live for ever, had once a very narrow turn for its life; almost and well-nigh ruined, but a step between it and a fatal apostacy, and yet snatched as a brand out of the burning, which will for ever magnify the riches of divine grace, in the nations of them that are saved.

Now let us take notice of the process of the psalmist's temptation, what he was tempted with, and tempted to.

1. He observed that foolish wicked people have oftentimes a very great share of outward prosperity. He says with grief, *the prosperity of the wicked*, ver. 3. Wicked people are really foolish people, and act against reason and their true interest, and yet every slander-by sees their prosperity.

(1.) They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life, ver. 5. *They are not in the troubles of other men*, even of wife and good men, *neither are they plagued like other men*, but seem as if by some special privilege, they were exempted from the common lot of sorrows. If they meet with some little trouble, it is nothing to what others endure, that are less sinners, and yet greater sufferers.

(2.) They seem to have the greatest share of the comforts of this life. They live at ease, and bathe themselves in pleasures, so that *their eyes stand out with fatness*, ver. 7. See what the excess of pleasure is; the moderate use of it enlargeth the eyes, but they that indulge themselves in ordi-

nately in the delights of sense, have their eyes ready to start out of their heads. Epicures are really their own tormentors, by putting a force upon nature, while they pretend to gratify it. And well may they feed themselves to the full who have more than heart can wish, more than they themselves ever thought of, or expected to be masters of. They have at least more than an humble, quiet, contented heart could wish, yet not so much as they themselves wish for. There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands, but nothing of the other life in their hearts. They are ungodly, live without the fear and worship of God, and yet they prosper and come on in the world, and not only are rich, but increase in riches, ver. 12. They are looked upon as thriving men, and while others have much ado to keep what they have, they are still adding more, more honour, power, pleasure, by increasing in riches. *They are the prosperous of the age*, so some read it.

(3.) (Which is most strange of all, and therefore is first mentioned.) Their end seems to be peace; this was ever thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly, *Psalm xxxvii. 37.* and yet to outward appearance, it is oftentimes the lot of the ungodly, ver. 4. *There are no bands in their death.* They are not taken off by a violent death, they are foolish, and yet die not as fools die; for *their hands are not bound, nor their feet put into fetters*, 2 Sam. iii. 33, 34. They are not taken off by an untimely death, like the fruit forced from the tree before it is ripe, but are left to hang on till, through old age, they gently drop of themselves. They do not die of sore and painful diseases, there are no pangs, no agonies in their death, but their strength is firm to the last, so that they scarce feel themselves die: They are of those who *die in their full strength; being wholly at ease and quiet*; not of those that *die in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat with pleasure*, Job xxi. 23—25. Nay they are not haunted by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments, they are not frightened even with the remembrance of their sins, or the prospect of their misery: but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death, either by the manner of their death, or the frame of their spirits in dying. Men may die like lambs, and yet have their place with the goats.

2. He observed that they made a very ill use of their outward prosperity, and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to grudge at it. If it had done them any good, if it had made them less provoking to God, or less oppressive to man, it would never have vexed; but it had a quite contrary effect upon them.

(1.) It made them very proud and haughty, because they live at ease; *Pride compasseth them as a chain*, ver. 6. They shew themselves to all that see them to be pulled up with their prosperity, as men shew their ornaments. *The pride of Israel testifies to his face*, Hos. v. 5. *Ha. iii. 9.* *Pride is on their chain, or necklace*; so Dr. Hammond reads it. It is no harm to wear a chain, or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceaseth to be an ornament. It is not so much what the dress or apparel is, (though we have rules for that, 1 Tim. ii. 9.) as what principle ties it on, and with what spirit it is worn. And as the pride of sinners appears in their dress, so it doth in their talk: *they speak loftily*, ver. 8. They affect great swelling words of vanity, 2 Pet. ii. 18. bragging of themselves, and disdaining all about them. Out of the abundance of the pride that is in their heart they speak big.

(2.) It made them oppressive to their poor neighbours, ver. 6. *Violence covereth them as a garment.* What they have got by fraud and oppressions they keep and increase by the same wicked methods, and care not what injury they do to others, nor what violence they use, so they may but enrich and aggrandize themselves. *They are corrupt*, like the giants, the sinners of the old world, when the earth was filled with violence, Gen. vi. 11—13. They care not what mischief they do, either for mischief sake, or for their own advantage sake: they speak wickedly concerning oppression, they oppress and justify themselves in it; they that speak well of sin, speak wickedly of it. They are corrupt, that is dissipated in pleasures, and every thing that is luxurious, (so some) and inordinately deride and speak maliciously, they care not whom they wound with the poisoned darts of calumny from on high they seek oppression.

(3.) It made them very insolent in their carriage, both towards God and man, ver. 9. *They set their mouth against the heavens*; putting contempt upon God himself and his honour, bidding defiance to him and his power and justice; they cannot reach the heavens with their hands to shake God's throne, else they would; but they shew their ill-will by setting their mouth against the heavens. Their tongue also walks through the earth, and they take liberty to abuse all that come in their way. No man's greatness or goodness can secure him from the scourge of the virulent tongue; they take a pride and pleasure in bantering all mankind: they are pests of the country, for they neither fear God nor regard man.

(4.) In all this they were very atheistical and profane. They could not have been thus wicked, if they had not learned to say, ver. 11. *How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?* So far were they from desiring the knowledge of God, who gave them all the good things they had, and would have taught them to use them well, that they were not willing to believe God had any knowledge of them, that he took any notice of their wickedness, or would ever call them to an account. As if because he is most high, he could not, or would not see them, Job xxii. 12. Whereas because he is most high, therefore he can and will take cognizance of all the children of men, and of all they do, or say, or think. What an affront is it to the God of infinite knowledge, from whom all knowledge is, to ask, *Is there knowledge in him?* Well may he say, ver. 12. *Behold these are the ungodly.*

3. He observed that while wicked men thus prospered in their impiety, and were made more impious by their prosperity, good people were in great affliction, and he himself in particular, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to quarrel with providence.

(1.) He looked abroad, and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss, ver. 10. Because the wicked are so very daring, therefore his people return hither, i. e. they are at the same pause, the same plunge that I am at; they know not what to say to it no more than I do, and the rather because waters of a full cup are wrung out of them; they are not only made to drink, and to drink deep of the bitter cup of affliction, but to drink all; care is taken that they lose not a drop of that unpleasant portion, the waters are wrung out unto them; that they may have the dregs of the cup. They pour out abundance of tears when they hear wicked people blaspheme God, and speak profanely, as David did, *Psalm cxix. 136.* These are the waters wrung out to them.

(2.) He looked at home, and felt himself under the continual frowns of providence; while the wicked were sunning themselves in its smiles, ver. 14. For my part, saith he, *All the day long have I been plagued with one affliction or another, and chastened every morning*, as daily as the morning comes. His afflictions were great, he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, every morning with the morning, and they continued without intermission, all the day long. This he thought was very hard, that when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he that worshipped God was under such great affliction. He spoke feelingly when



when he spoke of his own troubles, no disputing against sense, except by faith.

4. From all this arise a very strong temptation to cast off his religion. (1.) Some that observed the prosperity of the wicked, especially comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a providence, and to think that God had forsaken the earth. In this sense some take, ver. 11. 'There are those, even among God's professing people, that say, How doth God know? Sure all things are left to blind fortune, and not disposed of by an all-seeing God. Some of the heathen upon such a remark as this, have asked, *Quis putet esse Deos?* (2.) Though the psalmist's feet were not thus far gone, as to question God's omniscience; yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, and to say, ver. 13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain*, and have to no purpose washed my hands in innocency. See here what it is to be religious, it is to cleanse our hearts in the first place, by repentance and regeneration, and then to walk our hands in innocency by a universal reformation of our lives. It is not in vain to do this; not in vain to serve God and keep his ordinances; but good men have been sometimes tempted to say, it is in vain, and that religion is a thing that there is nothing to be got by, because they see wicked people in prosperity. But however the thing may appear now, when the pure in heart, those blessed ones, shall see God, *Matth. v. 8.* they will not say that they have cleansed their hearts in vain.

15. If I say, I will speak thus: behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. 16. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. 18. Surely thou didst let them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors. 20. As a dream when one awaketh; yea, O LORD, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

We have seen what a strong temptation the psalmist was in to envy profane profaneness; now here we are told how he kept footing, and got the victory.

1. He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, ver. 15. he got the victory by degrees; and this was the first point he gained, he was ready to say, *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain*: And though he had reason to say it, but he kept his mouth with this consideration. *If I say, I will speak thus: behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.* Observe here, (1.) Though he thought amiss, he took care not to utter that evil thought which he had conceived. Note. It is bad to think ill, but it is worse to speak it, for that is giving the evil thought an imprimatur; it is allowing it, giving consent to it, and publishing it for the infection of others: But it is a good sign we repent of the evil imagination of the heart, if we suppress it, and the error remaineth with ourselves. If therefore thou hast been foolish as to think evil, be so wise as to lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and let it go no farther, *Prov. xix. 21.* *If I say, I will speak thus.* Observe, Though his corrupt heart made this inference from the prosperity of the wicked, yet he did not mention it to those about him, till he had debated within himself, whether it was fit to be mentioned or no. Note. We must think twice before we speak once; both because some things may be thought, which yet may not be spoken, and because the second thoughts may correct the mistakes of the first. (2.) The reason why he would not speak it, was for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. Note, 1. There is a people in the world that are the generation of God's children, a set of men that hear and love God as their father. (2.) We must be very careful not to say or to do any thing which may justly offend any of these little ones, *Matth. xviii. 6.* especially that may offend the generation of them, may sadden their hearts, or weaken their hands, or shake their interest. (3.) There is nothing that can give more general offence to the generation of God's children, than to say that we have cleansed our heart in vain, or that it is in vain to serve God, for there is nothing more contrary to their universal sentiment and experience, nor any thing that grieves them more than to hear God thus reflected on. (1.) Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked, do in effect quit the tents of God's children.

2. He foresaw the ruin of wicked people; and by this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it. Because he durst not speak what he had thought, for fear of giving offence, he began to consider whether he had any good reason for that thought, ver. 16. I endeavoured to understand the meaning of this unaccountable dispensation of providence; but it was too painful for me, I could not conquer it by the strength of my own reasoning; it is a problem, not to be solved by the mere light of nature, for if there were not another life after this, we could not fully reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the justice of God; but, ver. 17. He went into the sanctuary of God, he applied himself to his devotions, meditated upon the attributes of God, and the things revealed, which belong to us and to our children; he consulted the scriptures, and the priests who attend the sanctuary; he prayed to God to make this matter plain to him, and to help him over this difficulty; and at length he understood the wretched end of wicked people, which he plainly foresaw to be such, that even in the height of their prosperity, they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin. Note, 1. There are many great things, and needful to be known, which will not be known otherwise than by going into the sanctuary of God, by the word and prayer. That therefore must be the resort of a tempted soul. (2.) We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgment; particularly we must judge by the end; all is well that ends well, everlasting well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlasting ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable.

1. The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain; the high places in which providence sets them are slippery places, ver. 18. where they cannot long keep footing, but when they offer to climb higher, that very attempt will be the occasion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm ground, it is not built upon God's favour or his promise; and they have not the satisfaction of feeling any firm ground it has.

2. Their destruction is sure and sudden, and very great. This cannot be meant of any temporal destruction; for they were supposed to spend all their days in wealth, and their death itself had no bands in it, in a moment they go down to the grave, so that even that could scarce be called their destruction; it must therefore be meant of eternal destruction on the other side

death; hell and destruction. They flourish for a time, but are undone for ever. (1.) Their ruin is sure and inevitable; he speaks of it as a thing done, they are cast down, for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted: *Thou castest them down.* It is destruction from the Almighty, *Joel i. 15.* from the glory of his power, *2 Thess. i. 9.* Who can support those whom God will cast down, whom God will lay load upon? (2.) It is swift and sudden; their damnation slumbers not; for *hence are they brought into desolation as in a moment?* ver. 19. It is easily effected, and will be a mighty surprise to themselves and all about them. (3.) It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total, final ruin, they are utterly consumed with terrors. It is the misery of the damned, that the terrors of the Almighty, whom they have made their enemy, fasten upon their godly consciences, which can neither shelter themselves from them, nor strengthen themselves under them; and therefore not their being, but their bliss must needs be utterly consumed by them; not the least degree of comfort or hope remains to them; the higher they were lifted up in their prosperity, the sorer will their fall be when they are cast down into destructions, (for the word is plural) and suddenly brought into desolation.

3. Their prosperity is therefore not to be envied at all, but despised rather: *quod erat demonstrandum*, ver. 20. *As a dream when one awaketh, so O LORD, when thou awakest,* or when they awake (as some read it) *thou shalt despise their image*, their shadow, and make it to vanish. In the day of the great judgment (so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it) when they are awaked out of their graves, thou shalt in wrath despise their image; for *they shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt.* See here, (1.) What their prosperity now is, it is but an image, a vain shew, a fashion of the world that passeth away; it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a mere shadow; not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream, which may please us a little while we are asleep, yet even then it disturbs our repose; but how pleasing soever it is, it is all but a cheat, all false, when we awake we find it so: A hungry man dreams that he eats, but he wakes, and his soul is empty, *Isa. xxix. 8.* A man is never the more rich or honourable for dreaming he is so: Who therefore will envy a man the pleasure of a dream? (2.) What will be the issue of it: God will awake to judgment, to plead his own and his people's injured cause; they shall be made to awake out of the sleep of their carnal security, and then God shall despise their image, *i. e.* He shall make it appear to all the world how despicable it is; so that the righteous shall laugh at them, *Psal. lii. 6, 7.* How did God despise that rich man's image, when he said, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, *Luke xii. 19, 20.* We ought to be of God's mind, for his judgment is according to truth; and not to admire and envy that which he despiseth and will despise; for sooner or later he will bring all the world to be of one mind.

21. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. 22. So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee. 23. Nevertheless, I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. 24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. 26. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 27. For lo, they that are far from thee, shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Behold Samson's riddle again unriddled, *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness*; for we have here an account of the good improvement which the psalmist made of that fore temptation with which he had been assaulted, and by which he was almost overcome. He that stumbles and doth not fall, by recovering himself takes so much the longer steps forwards: It was so with the psalmist here; divers good lessons he learned from his temptation, he struggles with it, and his victories over it. Nor should God suffer his people to be tempted, if his grace was not sufficient for them, nor only to save them harmless but to make them gainers by it; even this shall work for good.

1. He learned to think very humbly of himself, and to abase and accuse himself before God, ver. 21, 22. He reflects with shame upon the disorder and danger he was in, and the vexation he gave himself by entertaining the temptation, and parleying with it, *My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins*, as one afflicted with the acute pain of the stone in the region of the kidneys. If ill thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he doth not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but they are grievous and painful to him; temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, *2 Cor. xii. 7.* This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any other; where it constantly rests, it is the rottenness of the bones, *Prov. xiv. 30.* where it doth but occasionally come, it is the pricking of the reins. Fretfulness is a corruption that is its own correction.

Now in the reflection upon it, (1.) He owns it was his folly thus to vex himself; so foolish was I to be my own tormentor. Let peevish people thus reproach themselves for, and shame themselves out of their discontents; what a fool am I thus to make myself uneasy without a cause? (2.) He owns it was his ignorance to vex himself at this; so ignorant of that which I might have known, and which if I had known it aright, would have been sufficient to have silenced the fret. I was as a beast, Behemoth, a great beast, before thee: Beasts mind present things only, and never look before at what is to come; and so did I. If I had not been a great fool, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to have prevailed over me so far: What! to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity; to be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them! so foolish was I. Note, If good men do at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act amiss, when they see their error they will reflect upon it with sorrow and shame and self-abhorrence; will call themselves fools for it, *Surely I am more brutish than any man*, *Prov. xxx. 2.* *Job xlii. 5, 6.* Thus David, *2 Sam. xxiv. 10.*

2. He took occasion from hence to own his dependence and obligations to the grace of God, ver. 23. Nevertheless, as foolish as I am, I am continually with thee and in thy favour, thou hast holden me by my right hand. This may refer either, (1.) To the care God had taken of him, and the kindness he had shewed him all along from his beginning hitherto. He had said in the hour of temptation, ver. 14. *All the day long have I been plagued*; but here



here he corrects himself for that passionate complaint; though God has chastened me he has not cast me off, notwithstanding all the crosses of my life, *I have been continually with thee*, I have had thy presence with me, and thou hast been nigh unto me in all that which I have called upon thee for; and therefore, though perplexed, yet not in despair. Though God had sometimes written bitter things against me, yet he has still *holden me by my right hand*, both to keep me that I should not desert him, or fly off from him, and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burdens, or losing my way in the wilderness through which I have walked. If we have been kept in the way with God, kept close to our duty, and upheld in our integrity, we must own ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for our preservation; *Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto*. And if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or, (2.) To the late experience he had had of the power of divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation, and bringing him off a conqueror; I was foolish and ignorant, and yet thou hast had compassion on me and taught me, *Heb. v. 2.* and kept me under thy protection; for the unworthiness of man is no bar to the free grace of God. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, not our own wisdom, for we are foolish and ignorant, but to the gracious presence of God with us, and the prevalence of Christ's intercession for us that our faith may not fail. *My feet were almost gone*, and they had quite gone past recovery, but that thou hast holden me by my right hand, and so kept me from falling.

3. He encouraged himself to hope, that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work, would *preserve him to his heavenly kingdom*, as St. Paul doth, *2 Tim. iv. 18.* I am now upheld by thee, therefore *thou shalt guide me with thy counsel*; leading me as thou hast done hitherto by many a difficult step: And being now continually with thee, *thou shalt afterwards receive me to glory*, ver. 24. This completes the happiness of the saints, so that they have reason to envy the worldly prosperity of sinners. Note, 1. All those who commit themselves to God's conduct, he will guide with his counsel, with the counsel both of his Word and of his Spirit, the best counsellors. The psalmist had like to have paid dear for following his own counsels in this temptation, and therefore resolves for the future to take God's advice, which shall never be wanting to those that duly seek it with a resolution to follow it. 2. All those that are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world, shall be received to his glory in another world. If we make God's glory in us the end we aim at, he will make our glory with him the end we shall ever be happy in. Upon this consideration, let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness: If God direct us in the way of our duty, and prevent our turning aside out of it, he will afterwards, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to his kingdom and glory; the believing hopes and prospects of which, will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some threatening temptations.

4. He was hereby quickened to cleave the closer to God, and very much confirmed and comforted in the choice he had made of him, ver. 25, 26. his thoughts here dwell with delight upon his own happiness in God, as much greater than the unhappiness of the ungodly that prospered in the world. He saw little reason to envy them what they had in the creature, when he found how much more and better, surer and sweeter comforts he had in the Creator, and what cause he had to please himself with that. He had complained of his afflictions, ver. 14. but this makes them very light and easy, *All is well, if God be mine*. We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul towards God, and its repose in him, as that to a godly man really, which the prosperity of a worldly man is to him in conceit and imagination. *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* There is scarce a verse in all the psalms more expressive than this of the pious and devout affections of a soul to God; here it soars up towards him, follows hard after him; and yet at the same time has an entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

(1.) It is here supposed, that God alone is the felicity and chief good of man. He, and none but he, that made the soul can make it happy; there is none in heaven, none in earth that can pretend to do it but he.

(2.) Here are expressed the workings and breathings of a soul towards God accordingly. If God be our felicity,

(1.) Then we must have him; whom have I but thee? we must choose him, and make sure to ourselves an interest in him. What will it avail us that he is the felicity of souls, if he be not the felicity of our souls, and if we do not by a lively faith make him ours, by joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant?

(2.) Then our desire must be towards him, and our delight in him; word signifies both, we must delight in what we have of God, and desire what we yet further hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God but they must all terminate in him; desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him; this includes all our prayers, *Lord, give us thyself*; as that includes all the promises, *I will be to them a God*. The desire of our souls is to thy name.

(3.) We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other. (1.) *There is none in heaven but thee*, none to seek to, or trust in, none to court or covet acquaintance with but thee. God is himself more glorious than any celestial being, *Psal. lxxxix. 6.* and must be in our eyes infinitely more desirable. Excellent beings there are in heaven, but God only can make us happy: His favour is more infinitely more to us than the refreshment of the dews of Heaven, or the benign influence of the stars of heaven; more than the friendship of the saints in heaven, or the good offices of the angels there. (2.) *I desire none on earth besides thee*; not only none in heaven, a place at a distance, which we have but little acquaintance with, but none on earth neither, where we have many friends, and where much of our present interest and concern lies. Earth carries away the desires of the most of men, and yet none on earth, no persons, no things, no possessions, no delights that I desire besides thee, or with thee, in comparison or competition with thee, we must desire nothing besides God, but what we desire for him; (*nil prater te, nisi propter te*) nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without, so that it be made up in him. We must desire nothing besides God as needful to be a partner with him in making us happy.

(4.) Then we must repose ourselves in God with an entire satisfaction, ver. 26. Observe here, (1.) Great distress and trouble supposed, *My flesh and my heart fails*. Note, Others have experienced, and we must expect the failing both of flesh and heart, the body will fail by sickness, age, and death, and that which touches the bone and the flesh, touches us in a tender part, that part of ourselves which we have been but too fond of; when the flesh fails the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct and courage, and comfort fails. (2.) Sovereign relief provided in this distress; but *God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever*. Note, Gracious souls in their greatest distresses rest upon God as their spiritual strength, and their eternal portion. (1.) *He is the strength of my heart*; the rock of my heart, a firm foundation which will bear my weight, and not sink under it. God, the strength of my heart; I have found him so, I do so still, and hope ever

to find him so. In the distress supposed, he had put the case of a double failure, both flesh and heart fail, but in the relief he fastens on a single support, he leaves out the flesh and the consideration of that, it is enough that God is the strength of his heart. He speaks as one careless of the body, let that fail, there is no remedy, but concerned about the soul, to be strengthened in the inner manner. (2.) He is my portion for ever; he will not only support me while I am here, but make me happy when I go hence. The saints choose God for their portion, they have him for their portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their portion; a portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts.

5. He was fully convinced of the miserable estate of all wicked people: This he learned on the sanctuary upon this occasion, and he would never forget it, ver. 27. *Lo, they that are far from thee*, in a state of distance and estrangement, that desire the Almighty to depart from them, they shall certainly perish; so shall their doom be, they choose to be far from God, and they shall be far from him for ever; thou shalt justly destroy all them that go a whoring from thee, i. e. all apostates that in profession have been betrothed to God, but forsake him, their duty to him, and their communion with him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. The doom is severe, no less than perishing and being destroyed: It is universal, they shall all be destroyed without exception; it is certain, thou hast destroyed, it is as sure to be done, as if done already; and the destruction of some, is an earnest of the perdition of all ungodly men. God himself undertakes to do it, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall; thou, though infinite in goodness, yet wilt reckon for thine injured honour and abused patience, and wilt destroy them that go a whoring from thee.

6. He was mightily encouraged to cleave to God, and to confide in him, ver. 28. *If they that are far from God shall perish*, then, (1.) Let this oblige us to communion with God. If it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, when it is good, very good, the chief good, that good for a man in this life, which he should most carefully pursue and secure: It is best for me to draw near to God, and to have God draw near to me; the original may take in both: *But for my part* (so I would read it) *the approach of God is good for me*. Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us, and it is the happy meeting that makes the bliss. Here is a great truth laid down, that it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the application, it is good for me. Those are wise who know what is good for themselves; why, saith he, (and every good man agrees with him in it.) *It is good for me to draw near to God; it is my duty, it is my interest*. (2.) Let us therefore live in a continual dependance upon him; *I have put my trust in the Lord God*, and will never go a whoring from him after any creature-confidences. If wicked men, notwithstanding all their prosperity, shall perish, and be destroyed, then let us trust in the Lord God, in him, not in them, (see *Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4, 5.*) in him, and not in our worldly prosperity; let us trust in God, and neither fear him, nor be afraid of them; let us trust in him for a better portion than theirs is.

(2.) While we do so, let us not doubt but that we shall have occasion to praise his name. Let us trust in the Lord, that we may declare all his works, Note, Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God, shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

P S A L M LXXIV.

This psalm doth so particularly describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, by Nebuchadnezzar and the army of the Chaldeans, and can so hardly be applied to any other event we meet with in the Jewish history, that interpreters incline to think, either it was penned by David, or Asaph in David's time, with a prophetic reference to that sad event; which yet is not so probable; or, that it was penned by another Asaph, that lived at the time of the captivity, or by Jeremiah (for it is of a piece with his Lamentations) or some other prophet, and after the return out of captivity, was delivered to the sons of Asaph, who were called by his name, for the public service of the church: And that was the most eminent family of the singers in Ezra's time. See *Ezra ii. 41—iii. 10.* *Neh. xi. 17—22. xii. 35—46.* The deplorable case of the people of God at that time is here spread before the Lord, and left with him. The prophet in the name of the church, (1.) puts in complaining pleas of the miseries they suffered, for the quickening of their desires in prayer, ver. 1—11. (2.) He puts in comfortable pleas for the encouraging of their faith in prayer, ver. 12—17. (3.) He concludes with divers petitions to God for deliverances, ver. 18—23. In singing it we must be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and may apply it to any present distresses or desolations of any part of the christian church:

¶ MASCHIL OF ASAPH.

1. O GOD why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? 2. Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old: the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed, this mount Zion wherein thou hast dwelt. 3. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations: even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. 4. Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations: they set up their ensigns for signs. 5. A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. 6. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once, with axes and hammers. 7. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground. 8. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land. 9. We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. 10. O God how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? 11. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

This psalm is intitled Maschil, a psalm to give instruction, for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction in general it gives us, That when we are upon any account in distress,



distress, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so.

Three things they here complain of,

1. The displeasure of God against them, as that which was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instruments of their trouble, who they knew could have no power against them, unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Observe, the liberty they take to expostulate with God, *ver. 1.* And we hope not too great a liberty, for Christ himself upon the cross cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* So the church here, *O God, why hast thou forsaken us for ever?* Here they speak according to their present dark and melancholy apprehensions; for otherwise, *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid,* Rom. xi. 1. The people of God must not think that because they are cast down, they are therefore cast off; that because men cast them off, therefore God doth; and that because he seems to cast them off for a time, therefore they are really cast off for ever; yet this expostulation intimates, that they dreaded God's casting them off more than any thing, that they desired to be owned of him, whatever they suffered from men; and were desirous to know wherefore he thus contended with them, *Why doth thine anger smoke? i. e.* Why doth it rise up to such a degree, that all about us take notice of it, and ask, *What meaneth the heat of this great anger?* Deut. xxix. 24. Compare *ver. 20.* where the anger of the Lord and his jealousy are said to smoke against sinners.

Observe what they plead with God, now they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath.

(1.) They plead their relation to him, we are the sheep of thy pasture, the sheep wherewith thou hast been pleased to stock thy pasture, thy peculiar people whom thou art pleased to set apart for thyself, and design for thine own glory. That the wolves worry the sheep is not strange, but was ever any shepherd thus displeased at his own sheep? Remember, we are thy congregation, *ver. 2.* incorporated by thee and for thee, and devoted to thy praise; we are the rod, or tribe of thine inheritance, whom thou hast been pleased to claim a special property in above other people, *Deut. xxxii. 9.* and from whom thou hast received the rents and issues of praise and worship more than from the neighbour nations. Nay, a man's inheritance may lie at a great distance, but we are pleading for mount Zion wherein thou hast dwelt, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight and residence, thy demesne and mansion.

(2.) They plead the great things God had done for them, and the vast expence he had been at upon them. It is thy congregation, which thou hast not only made with a word's speaking, but purchased of old by many miracles of mercy, when they were first formed into a people; it is thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed when they were sold into servitude; *God gave Egypt to ruin for their ransom, gave men for them, and people for their life,* Isa. lxxiii. 3, 4. Now, Lord, wilt thou now abandon a people that cost thee so dear, and has been so dear to thee? And if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, was an encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to hope that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood; but the people of his purchase shall be for ever the people of his praise.

(3.) They plead the calamitous state that they were in, *ver. 3. Lift up thy feet,* i. e. come with speed to repair the desolations that are made in thy sanctuary, which otherwise will be perpetual and irreparable. It has been sometimes said, that the divine vengeance strikes with iron hands, yet it comes with leaden feet; and then those who wait for the day of the Lord cry, *Lord, lift up thy feet, Exalt thy steps,* i. e. magnify thyself in the out-going of thy providence. When the desolations of the sanctuary have continued long, we are tempted to think they will be perpetual; and it is a temptation; for God will avenge his own elect, will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with their oppressors and persecutors.

2. They complain of the outrage and cruelty of their enemies; not so much, no not at all, of what they had done to the prejudice of their secular interests; here are no complaints of the burning of their cities and ravaging of their country, but only what they had done against the sanctuary, and the synagogue. The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts, and affect us more than any worldly concern whatsoever: The desolation of God's house should grieve us more than the desolation of our own houses, for the matter is not great what comes of us and our families in this world, provided God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done.

He complains of the desolations of the sanctuary, as Daniel, *chap. ix. 17.* The temple at Jerusalem was the dwelling-place of God's name, and therefore the sanctuary or holy place, *ver. 7.* In this the enemies did wickedly; *ver. 3.* for they destroyed it in downright contempt of God and affront to him. (1.) They roared in the midst of God's congregations; there where God's faithful people attended on him with an humble, reverent silence, or softly speaking, they roared in a riotous, revelling manner, being very jovial that they had made themselves masters of that sanctuary, which they had sometimes heard formidable things of. (2.) They set up their ensigns for signs; the banners of their army they set up in the temple, (Israel's strongest castle as long as they kept close to God) as trophies of their victory: There where the signs of God's presence used to be, now the enemy had set up their ensigns. The daring defiance of God and his power, touched his people in a tender part. (3.) They took a pride in destroying the carved work of the temple. As much as formerly men thought it an honour to lend an hand to the building of the temple, and he was thought famous that helped to fell timber for that work, so much now they valued themselves upon their agency in destroying it, *ver. 5, 6.* Thus as when time was, those were celebrated for wise men that did service to religion, so now they are cried up for wits that help to run it down. Some read it thus, *They shew themselves, as one that lifts up axes on high in a thicket of trees,* for so do they break down the carved work of the temple; they make no more scruple of breaking down the rich waincoat of the temple, than wood-cutters do of hewing trees in the forest; such indignation have they at the sanctuary, that the most curious carving that ever was seen, is beaten down by the common soldiers without any regard had to it, either as a dedicated thing, or as a piece of exquisite art. (4.) They set fire to it, and so violated or destroyed it to the ground, *ver. 7.* The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, that stately, costly fabric, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 19.* And the Romans left not there one stone upon another, *Matt. xxiv. 2.* rasing it, rasing it even to the foundations, till Zion, the holy mountain, was, by Titus Vespasian, ploughed as a field.

(2.) He complains of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, which before the captivity were in use, though much more after. There God's word was read and expounded, and his name praised and called upon, without altars or sacrifices: These also they had a spite to, *ver. 8. Let us destroy them together;* not only the temple, but all the places of religious worship, and the worshippers with them, *Let us destroy them together,* let them be consumed in the same flame: pursuant to this impious resolve, they burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land, and laid them all waste. So great was their rage against religion, that the religious houses,

Vol. II. No. LXXXVII.\*

because religious, were all levelled with the ground, that God's worshippers might not glorify God and edify one another by meeting in solemn assemblies.

3. The great aggravation of all these calamities was, that they had no prospect at all of relief, nor could they foresee an end of them, *ver. 9.* We see our enemies signs set up in the sanctuary, but we see not our signs, none of the tokens of God's presence, no hopeful indications of approaching deliverance, *there is no more any prophet* to tell us how long the trouble will last, and when things concerning us shall have an end; that the hope of an issue at last may support us under our troubles. In the captivity in Babylon they had prophets, and had been told how long the captivity should continue, but the day was cloudy and dark, *Ezek. xxxiv. 12.* and they had not as yet the comfort of these gracious discoveries; God spoke once, yea, twice, good words and comfortable words, but they perceived them not. Observe, They do not complain, We see not our armies, there are no men of war to command our forces, nor any to go forth with our hosts; but no prophets, none to tell us how long.

This puts them upon expostulating with God, as delaying, (1.) To assert his honour, *ver. 10. How long shall the adversary reproach, and blaspheme thy name?* In the desolations of the sanctuary our chief concern should be for the glory of God, that that may not be injured by the blasphemies of those who persecute his people for his sake, because they are his; and therefore our enquiry should not be how long shall we be troubled, but how long shall God be blasphemed? (2.) To exert his power, *ver. 11. Why withdrawest thou thy hand,* and dost not stretch it out to deliver thy people, and destroy thine enemies? *Pluck it out of thy bosom,* and be not as a man astonished, as a man that cannot save, or will not, *Jer. xiv. 9.* When the power of enemies is most threatening, it is comfortable to fly to the power of God.

12. For God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. 14. Thou breakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 15. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driest up mighty rivers. 16. The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. 17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.

The lamenting church fastens upon something here which she calls to mind, and therefore hath she hope, as *Lam. iii. 21.* and with which she encourageth herself, and silenceth her own complaints.

Two things quiet the minds of those that are here sorrowing for the solemn assembly.

1. That God is the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, *ver. 12. God is my king of old.* This comes in both as a plea in prayer to God, *Psalm. xlv. 4. Thou art my king, O God,* and as a prop to their own faith and hope, to encourage themselves to expect deliverance, considering the days of old, *Psalm. lxxvii. 5.* The church speaks as a complex body, the same in every age, and therefore calls God my King, my King of old, or from antiquity, i. e. he has of old put himself into that relation to them, and has appeared and acted for them in that relation; As Israel's King he has wrought salvation in the midst of the nations of the earth; for what he has done in the government of the world, has tended towards the salvation of his church.

Several things are here mentioned which God had done for his people: as their king of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him, and depend upon him. (1.) He had divided the sea before them when they came out of Egypt, not by the strength of Moses or his rod, but by his own strength: and he that could do that could do any thing. (2.) He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians; Pharaoh was the leviathan, the Egyptians were the dragons, fierce and cruel. Observe, (1.) The victory obtained over these enemies, God broke their heads, baffled their politics; when Israel, the more they were afflicted by them, the more they multiplied, crushed their powers, though complicated, ruined their country by ten plagues, and at last drowned them all in the Red sea; *This is Pharaoh and all his multitude,* *Ezek. xxxi. 18.* It was the Lord's doing, none but he could do it, and he did it with a strong hand and out-stretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head. (2.) The improvement of this victory for the encouragement of the church. *Thou gavest him to be meat to the people of Israel now going to inhabit the wilderness.* The spoil of the Egyptians enriched them; they stripped their slain, and so got the Egyptians arms and weapons as before they had got their jewels. Or rather, this providence was meat to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. It was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of. Note, The breaking of the heads of the church's enemies, is the joy and strength of the hearts of the church's friends. Thus the companions make a banquet even of leviathan, *Job xli. 6.* (3.) God had both ways altered the course of nature, both in fetching streams out of the rock, and turning streams into the rock, *ver. 15.* (1.) He hath dissolved the rock into waters, *Thou didst bring out the fountain and the flood* (so some read it) and every one knows whence it was brought, out of the rock, out of the flinty rock. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially be remembered, that that rock was Christ, and the waters out of it spiritual drink. (2.) He had congealed the waters into rock. *Thou driest up mighty rapid rivers,* Jordan particularly, at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things could now deliver his oppressed people, and break the yoke of the oppressors, as he had done formerly: nay, he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

2. That the God of Israel is the God of nature, *ver. 16, 17.* It is he that orders the regular successions and revolutions, (1.) Of day and night: he is the Lord of all time; the evening and the morning are of his ordaining; it is he that opens the eye-lids of the morning light, and draws the curtains of the evening shadow. *He hath prepared the moon and the sun;* (so some read it) the two great lights, to rule by day and by night alternately. The preparing of them, notes their constant readiness and exact observance of their time, which they never miss a moment. (2.) Of summer and winter; thou hast appointed all the bounds of the earth, and the different climates of its several regions, for thou hast made summer and winter, both frigid and torrid zone: or rather, the constant revolutions of the year, and its several seasons. Herein we are to acknowledge God, from



here he corrects himself for that passionate complaint, though God has chastened me, he has not cast me off, notwithstanding all the crosses of my life. *I have been continually with thee*, I have had thy presence with me, and thou hast been with me in all that which I have called upon thee for; and therefore, though perplexed, yet not in despair. Though God had sometimes written bitter things against me, yet he has still *held me by my right hand*, both to keep me that I should not desert him, or fly off from him, and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burdens, or losing my way in the wilderness through which I have walked. If we have been kept in the way with God, kept close to our duty, and upheld in our integrity, we must own ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for our preservation: *Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto*. And if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or, (2.) To the late experience he had had of the power of divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation, and bringing him off a conqueror; I was foolish and ignorant, and yet thou hast had compassion on me and taught me, *Heb. v. 2.* and kept me under thy protection; for the unworthiness of man is no bar to the free grace of God. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, not our own wisdom, for we are foolish and ignorant, but to the gracious presence of God with us, and the prevalence of Christ's intercession for us that our faith may not fail. *My feet were almost gone*, and they had quite gone past recovery, but that thou hast holden me by my right hand, and so kept me from falling.

3. He encouraged himself to hope, that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work, would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as St. Paul doth, *2 Tim. iv. 18.* I am now upheld by thee, therefore thou shalt guide me with thy counsel; leading me as thou hast done hitherto by many a difficult step: And being now continually with thee, thou shalt afterwards receive me to glory, ver. 24. This completes the happiness of the saints, so that they have reason to envy the worldly prosperity of sinners. Note, 1. All those who commit themselves to God's conduct, he will guide with his counsel, with the counsel both of his Word and of his Spirit, the best counsellors. The psalmist had like to have paid dear for following his own counsels in this temptation, and therefore resolves for the future to take God's advice, which shall never be wanting to those that duly seek it with a resolution to follow it. 2. All those that are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world, shall be received to his glory in another world. If we make God's glory in us the end we aim at, he will make our glory with him the end we shall ever be happy in. Upon this consideration, let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness: If God direct us in the way of our duty, and prevent our turning aside out of it, he will afterwards, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to his kingdom and glory; the believing hopes and prospects of which, will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some threatening temptations.

4. He was hereby quickened to cleave the closer to God, and very much confirmed and comforted in the choice he had made of him, ver. 25, 26. his thoughts here dwell with delight upon his own happiness in God, as much greater than the unhappiness of the ungodly that prospered in the world. He saw little reason to envy them what they had in the creature, when he found how much more and better, surer and sweeter comforts he had in the Creator, and what cause he had to please himself with that. He had complained of his afflictions, ver. 11, but this makes them very light and easy. *It is well, if God be mine*. We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul towards God, and its repose in him, as that to a godly man really, which the prosperity of a worldly man is to him in conceit and imagination. *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* There is scarce a verse in all the psalms more expressive than this of the pious and devout affections of a soul to God; here it soars up towards him, follows hard after him; and yet at the same time has an entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

(1.) It is here supposed, that God alone is the felicity and chief good of man. He, and none but he, that made the soul can make it happy; there is none in heaven, none in earth that can pretend to do it but he.

(2.) There are expressed the workings and breathings of a soul towards God accordingly. If God be our felicity,

(1.) Then we must love him; whom have I but thee? we must choose him, and make him to ourselves an interest in him. What will it avail us that he is the felicity of souls, if he be not the felicity of our souls, and if we do not by a lively faith make him ours, by joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant?

(2.) Then our desire must be towards him, and our delight in him; and since desires both, we must delight in what we have of God, and desire what we yet further hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God but they must all terminate in him; desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him; this includes all our prayers, *Lord, give us thyself*; as that includes all the promises, *I will be to them a God*. The desire of our soul is to thy name.

(3.) We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other. (1.) *There is none in heaven but thee*, none to seek to, or trust in, none to court or covet acquaintance with but thee. God is himself more glorious than any celestial being, *Psalm LXXXIX. 6.* and must be in our eyes infinitely more desirable. Excellent beings there are in heaven, but God only can make us happy: His favour is more infinitely more to us than the refreshment of the dews of Heaven, or the benign influence of the stars of heaven; more than the friendship of the saints in heaven, or the good offices of the angels there. (2.) *I desire none on earth besides thee*; not only none in heaven, a place at a distance, which we have but little acquaintance with, but none on earth neither, where we have many friends, and where much of our present interest and concern lies. Earth carries away the desires of the most of men, and yet none on earth, no persons, no things, no possessions, no delights that I desire besides thee, or with thee, in comparison or competition with thee, we must desire nothing besides God, but what we desire for him; (*nil propter te, nisi propter te*) nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without, so that it be made up in him. We must desire nothing besides God as needful to be a partner with him in making us happy.

(4.) Then we must repose ourselves in God with an entire satisfaction, ver. 26. Observe here, (1.) Great distress and trouble supposed, *My flesh and my heart fails*. Note, Others have experienced, and we must expect the failing both of flesh and heart, the body will fail by sickness, age, and death, and that which touches the bone and the flesh, touches us in a tender part, that part of ourselves which we have been but too fond of; when the flesh fails the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct, and courage, and comfort fails. (2.) Sovereign relief provided in this distress; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Note, Gracious souls in their greatest distresses rest upon God as their spiritual strength, and their eternal portion. (1.) *He is the strength of my heart*; the rock of my heart, a firm foundation which will bear my weight, and not sink under it. God, the strength of my heart; I have found him so, I do so still, and hope ever

to find him so. In the distress (supposed, he had put the case of a double failure, both flesh and heart fail, but in the relief he fastens on a single support, he leaves out the flesh and the consideration of that. It is enough that God is the strength of his heart. He speaks as one careless of the body, let that fail, there is no remedy, but concerned about the soul, to be strengthened in the inner manner. (2.) He is my portion for ever; he will not only support me while I am here, but make me happy when I go hence. The saints choose God for their portion, they have him for their portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their portion; a portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts.

5. He was fully convinced of the miserable estate of all wicked people: This he learned on the sanctuary upon this occasion, and he would never forget it, ver. 27. *Lo, they that are far from thee*, in a state of distance and estrangement, that desire the Almighty to depart from them, they shall certainly perish; so shall their doom be, they choose to be far from God, and they shall be far from him for ever; thou shalt justly destroy all them that go a whoring from thee, i. e. all apostates that in profession have been betrothed to God, but forsake him, their duty to him, and their communion with him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. The doom is severe, no less than perishing and being destroyed: It is universal, they shall all be destroyed without exception; it is certain, thou hast destroyed, it is as sure to be done, as if done already; and the destruction of some, is an earnest of the perdition of all ungodly men. God himself undertakes to do it, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall; thou, though infinite in goodness, yet wilt reckon for thine injured honour and abused patience, and wilt destroy them that go a whoring from thee.

6. He was mightily encouraged to cleave to God, and to confide in him, ver. 28. *If they that are far from God shall perish*, then, (1.) Let this oblige us to communion with God. If it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, when it is good, very good, the chief good, that good for a man in this life, which he should most carefully pursue and secure: It is best for me to draw near to God, and to have God draw near to me; the original may take in both: *But for my part* (so I would read it) *the approach of God is good for me*. Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us, and it is the happy meeting that makes the bliss. Here is a great truth laid down, that it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the application, it is good for me. Those are wise who know what is good for themselves; why, faith he, (and every good man agrees with him in it.) *It is good for me to draw near to God; it is my duty, it is my interest*. (2.) Let us therefore live in a continual dependance upon him; *I have put my trust in the Lord God*, and will never go a whoring from him after any creature-considerers. If wicked men, notwithstanding all their prosperity, shall perish, and be destroyed, then let us trust in the Lord God, in him, not in them, (see *Psalm cxlvi. 3, 4, 5.*) in him, and not in our worldly prosperity; let us trust in God, and neither fear them, nor be afraid of them; let us trust in him for a better portion than theirs.

(2.) While we do so, let us not doubt but that we shall live on to praise his name. Let us trust in the Lord, that we may do so till he works, Note, Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God, shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

P S A L M LXXIV.

This psalm doth so particularly describe the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple, by Nebuchadnezzar and the army of the Chaldeans, and is so hardly be applied to any other event we meet with in the Jewish history, that interpreters incline to think, either it was penned by David, or Asaph in David's time, with a prophetic reference to that great event; which yet is not so probable; or, that it was penned by another Asaph, that lived at the time of the captivity, or by Jeremiah (for it is of a piece with his Lamentations) or some other prophet, and after the return out of captivity, was delivered to the sons of Asaph, who were called by his name, for the public service of the church: And that was the most eminent family of the singers in Ezra's time. See Ezra ii. 41.—iii. 10. Neh. xi. 17.—xii. 35—46. The deplorable case of the people of God at that time is here spread before the Lord, and left with him. The prophet in the name of the church, (1.) puts in complaining pleas of the miseries they suffered, for the quickening of their desires in prayer, ver. 1—11. (2.) He puts in comfortable pleas for the encouraging of their faith in prayer, ver. 12—17. (3.) He concludes with divers petitions to God for deliverances, ver. 18—23. In singing it we must be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and may apply it to any present distresses or desolations of any part of the christian church.

MASCHIL OF ASAPH.

1. O GOD why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? 2. Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old: the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed, this mount Zion wherein thou hast dwelt. 3. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations: even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. 4. Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations: they set up their ensigns for signs. 5. A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. 6. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once, with axes and hammers. 7. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground. 8. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land. 9. We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. 10. O God how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? 11. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

This psalm is intitled Maschil, a psalm to give instruction, for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction in general it gives us, That when we are upon any account in distress,



distress, it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so.

Three things they here complain of,

1. The displeasure of God against them, as that which was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instruments of their trouble, who they knew could have no power against them, unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Observe, the liberty they take to expostulate with God, *ver. 1.* And we hope not too great a liberty, for Christ himself upon the cross cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* So the church here, *O God, why hast thou forsaken us for ever?* Here they speak according to their present dark and melancholy apprehensions; for otherwise, *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid,* Rom. xi. 1. The people of God must not think that because they are cast down, they are therefore cast off; that because men cast them off, therefore God doth; and that because he seems to cast them off for a time, therefore they are really cast off for ever; yet this expostulation intimates, that they dreaded God's casting them off more than any thing, that they desired to be owned of him, whatever they suffered from men; and were desirous to know wherefore he thus contended with them, *Why doth thine anger smoke? i. e.* Why doth it rise up to such a degree, that all about us take notice of it, and ask, *What meaneth the heat of this great anger?* Deut. xxix. 24. Compare *ver. 20.* where the anger of the Lord and his jealousy are said to smoke against sinners.

Observe what they plead with God, now they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath.

(1.) They plead their relation to him, we are the sheep of thy pasture, the sheep wherewith thou hast been pleased to stock thy pasture, thy peculiar people whom thou art pleased to set apart for thyself, and design for thine own glory. That the wolves worry the sheep is not strange, but was ever any shepherd thus displeased at his own sheep? Remember, we are *thy congregation*, *ver. 2.* incorporated by thee and for thee, and devoted to thy praise; we are the rod, or tribe of thine inheritance, whom thou hast been pleased to claim a special property in above other people, *Deut. xxxii. 9.* and from whom thou hast received the rents and issues of praise and worship more than from the neighbour nations. Nay, a man's inheritance may lie at a great distance, but we are pleading for mount Zion wherein thou hast dwelt, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight and residence, thy demesne and mansion.

(2.) They plead the great things God had done for them, and the vast expence he had been at upon them. It is thy congregation, which thou hast not only made with a word's speaking, but purchased of old by many miracles of mercy, when they were first formed into a people; it is thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed when they were sold into servitude; *God gave Egypt to ruin for their ransom, gave men for them, and people for their life*, Isa. lxxiii. 3, 4. Now, Lord, wilt thou now abandon a people that cost thee so dear, and has been so dear to thee? And if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, was an encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to hope that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood; but the people of his purchase shall before ever the people of his praise.

(3.) They plead the calamitous state that they were in, *ver. 3.* Lift up thy feet, *i. e.* come with speed to repair the desolations that are made in thy sanctuary, which otherwise will be perpetual and irreparable. It has been sometimes said, that the divine vengeance strikes with iron hands, yet it comes with leaden feet; and then those who wait for the day of the Lord cry, *Lord, lift up thy feet, Exalt thy steps, i. e.* magnify thyself in the out-going of thy providence. When the desolations of the sanctuary have continued long, we are tempted to think they will be perpetual; and it is a temptation; for God will avenge his own elect, will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with their oppressors and persecutors.

2. They complain of the outrage and cruelty of their enemies; not so much, no not at all, of what they had done to the prejudice of their secular interests; here are no complaints of the burning of their cities and ravaging of their country, but only what they had done against the sanctuary, and the synagogue. The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts, and affect us more than any worldly concern whatsoever: The desolation of God's house should grieve us more than the desolation of our own houses, for the matter is not great what comes of us and our families in this world, provided God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done.

He complains of the desolations of the sanctuary, as Daniel, *chap. ix. 17.* The temple at Jerusalem was the dwelling-place of God's name, and therefore the sanctuary or holy place, *ver. 7.* In this the enemies did wickedly, *ver. 3.* for they destroyed it in downright contempt of God and affront to him. (1.) They roared in the midst of God's congregations: there where God's faithful people attended on him with an humble, reverent silence, or softly speaking, they roared in a riotous, revelling manner, being very jovial that they had made themselves masters of that sanctuary, which they had sometimes heard formidable things of. (2.) They set up their ensigns for signs; the banners of their army they set up in the temple, (Israel's strongest castle as long as they kept close to God) as trophies of their victory: There where the signs of God's presence used to be, now the enemy had set up their ensigns. The daring defiance of God and his power, touched his people in a tender part. (3.) They took a pride in destroying the carved work of the temple. As much as formerly men thought it an honour to lend an hand to the building of the temple, and he was thought famous that helped to sell timber for that work, so much now they valued themselves upon their agency in destroying it, *ver. 5, 6.* Thus as when time was, those were celebrated for wise men that did service to religion, so now they are cried up for wits that help to run it down. Some read it thus, *They shew themselves, as one that lifts up axes on high in a thicket of trees, for so do they break down the carved work of the temple; they make no more scruple of breaking down the rich waincoat of the temple, than wood-cutters do of hewing trees in the forest; such indignation have they at the sanctuary, that the most curious carving that ever was seen, is beaten down by the common soldiers without any regard had to it, either as a dedicated thing, or as a piece of exquisite art.* (4.) They set fire to it, and so violated or destroyed it to the ground, *ver. 7.* The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, that stately, costly fabric, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 19.* And the Romans left not there one stone upon another, *Matt. xxiv. 2.* raising it, raising it even to the foundations, till Zion, the holy mountain, was, by Titus Vespasian, ploughed as a field.

(2.) He complains of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, which before the captivity were in use, though much more after. There God's word was read and expounded, and his name, raised and called upon, without altars or sacrifices: These also they had a spite to, *ver. 8.* Let us destroy them together; not only the temple, but all the places of religious worship, and the worshippers with them, *Let us destroy them together*, let them be consumed in the same flame: pursuant to this impious resolve, they burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land, and laid them all waste. So great was their rage against religion, that the religious houses,

Vol. II. No. LXXXVII.\*

because religious, were all levelled with the ground, that God's worshippers might not glorify God and edify one another by meeting in solemn assemblies.

3. The great aggravation of all these calamities was, that they had no prospect at all of relief, nor could they foresee an end of them, *ver. 9.* We see our enemies signs set up in the sanctuary, but we see not our signs, none of the tokens of God's presence, no hopeful indications of approaching deliverance, *there is no more any prophet* to tell us how long the trouble will last, and when things concerning us shall have an end; that the hope of an issue at last may support us under our troubles. In the captivity in Babylon they had prophets, and had been told how long the captivity should continue, but the day was cloudy and dark, *Ezek. xxxiv. 12.* and they had not as yet the comfort of these gracious discoveries; God spoke once, yea, twice, good words and comfortable words, but they perceived them not. Observe, They do not complain, We see not our armies, there are no men of war to command our forces, nor any to go forth with our holts; but no prophets, none to tell us how long.

This puts them upon expostulating with God, as delaying, (1.) To assert his honour, *ver. 10.* How long shall the adversary reproach, and blaspheme thy name? In the desolations of the sanctuary our chief concern should be for the glory of God, that that may not be injured by the blasphemies of those who persecute his people for his sake, because they are his; and therefore our enquiry should not be how long shall we be troubled, but how long shall God be blasphemed? (2.) To exert his power, *ver. 11.* Why withdrawest thou thy hand, and dost not stretch it out to deliver thy people, and destroy thine enemies? Pluck it out of thy bosom, and be not as a man astonished, as a man that cannot save, or will not, *Jer. xiv. 9.* When the power of enemies is most threatening, it is comfortable to fly to the power of God.

12. For God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. 14. Thou breakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 15. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers. 16. The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. 17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.

The lamenting church fastens upon something, here which she calls to mind, and therefore hath the hope, as *Lam. iii. 21.* and with which she encourageth herself, and silenceth her own complaints.

Two things quiet the minds of those that are here sorrowing for the solemn assembly.

1. That God is the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, *ver. 12.* God is my king of old. This comes in both as a plea in prayer to God, *Psalm. xlv. 4.* Thou art my king, O God, and as a prop to their own faith and hope, to encourage themselves to expect deliverance, considering the *days of old*, *Psalm. lxxvii. 5.* The church speaks as a complex body, the same in every age, and therefore calls God my King, my King of old, or from antiquity, *i. e.* he has of old put himself into that relation to them, and has appeared and acted for them in that relation; As Israel's King he has wrought salvation in the midst of the nations of the earth; for what he has done in the government of the world, has tended towards the salvation of his church.

Several things are here mentioned which God had done for his people as their king of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him and depend upon him. (1.) He had divided the sea before them when they came out of Egypt, not by the strength of Moses or his rod, but by his own strength; and he that could do that could do any thing. (2.) He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians; Pharaoh was the leviathan, the Egyptians were the dragons, fierce and cruel. Observe, (1.) The victory obtained over these enemies. God broke their heads, balled their politics; when Israel, the more they were afflicted by them, the more they multiplied, crushed their powers, though complicated, ruined their country by ten plagues, and at last drowned them all in the Red sea; *This is Pharaoh and all his multitude*, *Ezek. xxxi. 18.* It was the Lord's doing, none but he could do it, and he did it with a strong hand and out-stretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head. (2.) The improvement of this victory for the encouragement of the church. Thou gavest him to be meat to the people of Israel now going to inhabit the wilderness. The spoil of the Egyptians enriched them; they stripped their slain, and so got the Egyptians arms and weapons as before they had got their jewels. Or rather, this providence was meat to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. It was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of. Note, The breaking of the heads of the church's enemies, is the joy and strength of the hearts of the church's friends. Thus the companions make a banquet even of leviathan, *Job xli. 6.* (3.) God had both ways altered the course of nature, both in felling streams out of the rock, and turning streams into the rock, *ver. 15.* (1.) He hath dissolved the rock into waters, *Thou didst bring out the fountain and the flood* (so some read it) and every one knows whence it was brought, out of the rock, out of the flinty rock. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially be remembered, that that rock was Christ, and the waters out of it spiritual drink. (2.) He had congealed the waters into rock. Thou driedst up mighty rapid rivers, Jordan particularly, at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things could now deliver his oppressed people, and break the yoke of the oppressors, as he had done formerly; nay, he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

2. That the God of Israel is the God of nature, *ver. 16, 17.* It is he that orders the regular successions and revolutions, (1.) Of day and night: he is the Lord of all time; the evening and the morning are of his ordaining; it is he that opens the eye-lids of the morning light, and draws the curtains of the evening shadow. He hath prepared the moon and the sun; (so some read it) the two great lights, to rule by day and by night alternately. The preparing of them, notes their constant readiness and exact observance of their time, which they never miss a moment. (2.) Of summer and winter; thou hast appointed all the bounds of the earth, and the different climates of its several regions, for thou hast made summer and winter, both frigid and torrid zone: or rather, the constant revolutions of the year, and its several seasons. Herein we are to acknowledge God, from



whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived: but how doth this come in here? 1. He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve this course of nature by the diurnal and annual motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with him nothing is impossible, nor any difficulties or oppositions insuperable. 2. He that is faithful to his covenant with the day and with the night, and preserves the ordinances of heaven inviolable, will certainly make good his promise to his people, and never call off those whom he has chosen. *Jer. xxxi. 35, 36.*—*xxxiii. 20, 21.* His covenant with Abraham and his seed is as firm as that with Noah and his sons, *Gen. viii. 21.* 3. Day and night, summer and winter, being counterchanged in the course of nature throughout all the borders of the earth, we can expect no other, but that trouble and peace, prosperity and adversity, should be in like manner counterchanged in all the borders of the church. We have as much reason to expect affliction, as to expect night and winter. But we have then no more reason to despair of the return of comfort, than we have to despair of day and summer.

18. Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. 19. O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude of the wicked, forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. 20. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. 21. O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. 23. Forget not the voice of thine enemies; the tumult of those that rise up against thee, increaseth continually.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, most earnestly begs that God would appear for them against their enemies, and put an end to their present troubles; and to encourage his own faith, he interests God in this matter, *ver. 22.* *Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.* This we may be sure he will do, for he is jealous for his own honour; whatever is his own cause he will plead it with a strong hand, will appear against those that oppose it, and with and for those that cordially espouse it. He will arise and plead it, though for a time he seems to neglect it, he will stir up himself, will manifest himself, will do his own work in his own time. Note, The cause of religion is God's own cause, and he will certainly plead it.

Now to make it out that the cause is God's, he pleads,

1. That the persecutors are God's sworn enemies; Lord, they have not only abused us, but they have been and are abusive to thee; what is done against us for thy sake, doth by consequence reflect upon thee. But that is not all, they have directly and immediately reproached thee, and blasphemed thy name, *ver. 18.* This was that which they roared in the sanctuary, they triumphed as if they had now got the mastery of the God of Israel, of whom they had heard such great things. As nothing grieves the saints more, than to hear God's name blasphemed, so nothing encourages them more to hope that God will appear against their enemies than when they are arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as to reproach God himself; this fills the measure of their sins apace, and hastens their ruin. The psalmist insists much upon this: We dare not answer their reproaches, Lord, do thou answer them. Remember that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name, *ver. 18.* and that still the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. Observe the character of those that reproach God, they are foolish. As atheism is folly, *Psal. xiv. 1.* so is profaneness and blasphemy no less so. Perhaps they are cried up for the wits of the age that ridicule religion and sacred things: But really they are the greatest fools, and will shortly be made to appear so before all the world. And yet less their malice, they reproach God daily, as constantly as his faithful worshippers pray to him and praise him. Their imprudence: they do not hide their blasphemous thoughts in their own bosoms, but proclaim them with a loud voice: *Forget not the voice of thine enemies, ver. 23.* And this with a daring defiance of divine justice, they rise up against thee, and by their blasphemies even wage war with heaven, and take up arms against the Almighty: Their noise and tumult ascendeth continually (so some) as the cry of Sodom came up before God calling for vengeance, *Gen. xviii. 21.* It increaseth continually (so we read it) they grow worse and worse, and are hardened in their impieties by their successes. Now Lord, remember this, do not forget it; God needs not to be put in remembrance by us of what he has to do, but thus we must shew our concern for his honour, and believe that he will vindicate us.

2. That the persecuted are his covenant people.

(1.) See what distress they are in, they are fallen into the hands of the multitude of the wicked, *ver. 19.* How are they increased that trouble them? There is no standing before an enraged multitude, especially as these, armed with power; and as they are numerous, so they are barbarous; the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. The land of the Chaldeans, where there was none of the light of the knowledge of the true God; (though otherwise it was famed for learning and arts) was indeed a dark place, the inhabitants of it were alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, and therefore they were cruel; where there was no true divinity, there was scarce to be found common humanity; they were especially cruel to the people of God; certainly they have no knowledge who eat them up, *Psal. xiv. 4.* They are oppressed, *ver. 21.* because they are poor and unable to fight themselves, they are oppressed, and so impoverished and made poor.

(2.) See what reason they had to hope that God would appear for their relief, and not suffer them to be always thus trampled upon. Observe how the psalmist pleads with God for them. (1.) It is thy turtle-dove that is ready to be swallowed up by the multitude of the wicked, *ver. 19.* The church is a dove for harmlessness and mildness, innocency and inoffensiveness, purity and fruitfulness; a dove for mournfulness in a day of distress; a turtle-dove for fidelity, and the constancy of love; turtle-doves and pigeons were the only fowls that were offered in sacrifice to God: Shall thy turtle-dove that is true to thee and devoted to thine honour, be delivered, its life and soul and all, into the hand of the multitude of the wicked, to whom it will soon become an easy and acceptable prey? Lord, it will be thine honour to help the weak, especially to help thine own. (3.) It is the congregation of thy poor, and they are not the less thine for their being poor, for God hath chosen the poor of this world, *James ii. 5.* But they have the more reason to expect that thou wilt appear for them because they are many, it is the congregation of thy poor; let them not be abandoned and forgotten for ever. (5.) They are in covenant with thee; and wilt thou not

have respect unto the covenant? *ver. 20.* Wilt thou not perform the promises thou hast in thy covenant made to them? wilt thou not own them whom thou hast brought into the bond of the covenant? When God delivereth his people, it is in remembrance of his covenant, *Lev. xxvi. 42.* Lord, though we are unworthy to be respected, yet have respect to the covenant. (3.) They trust in thee, and boast of their relation to thee, and expectations from thee; O let not them return ashamed of their hope, *ver. 21.* as they will be if they be disappointed. (5.) If thou deliver them, they will praise thy name, and give thee the glory of their deliverance. Appear, Lord, for those that will praise thy name, against those that blaspheme it.

PSALM LXXV.

Though this psalm is attributed to Asaph in the title, yet it doth so exactly agree with David's circumstances at his coming to the crown after the death of Saul, that most interpreters apply it to that juncture, and suppose that either Asaph penned it in the person of David, as his poet-laureat, probably the substance of the psalm was some speech which David made to a convention of the states, at his accession to the government, and that Asaph turned it into verse, and published it in a poem, for the better spreading of it among the people; or that David penned it, and delivered it to Asaph as presentor of the temple. In this psalm, (1.) David returns God thanks for bringing him to the throne, *ver. 1—9.* (2.) He promiseth to lay out himself for the people's good, in the use of the power God had given him, *ver. 2, 3—10.* (3.) He checks the insolence of those that opposed his coming to the throne, *ver. 4, 5.* (4.) He fetcheth a reason for all this from God's sovereign dominion in the affairs of the children of men, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* In singing this psalm we must give to God the glory of all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, believing that they are all according to his counsel, and he will make them all to work for the good of his church.

¶ To the chief Musician, Altschith. A Psalm or Song of Asaph

1. UNTO thee, O God, do we give thanks: unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare. 2. When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly. 3. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. 4. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn. 5. Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck.

In these verses,

1. The psalmist gives to God the praise of his advancement to honour and power, and the other great things he had done for him and for his people Israel, *ver. 1.* *Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks,* for all the favours thou hast bestowed upon us; and again *unto thee do we give thanks:* for our thanksgivings must be often repeated; did we not often pray for a mercy when we were in a pursuit of it, and shall we think it will suffice once or twice to give thanks when we have obtained it? Not only I do give thanks but we do; and all my friends. If we share with others in the mercies we must join with them in their praises, unto thee, O God, the author of our mercies; and we will not give that glory to the instruments which is due to thee only. For that thy name is near, i. e. that the complete accomplishment of thy promise made to David is not far off, thy wondrous works which thou hast already done for him to declare. Note, 1. There are many works which God doth for his people, that may truly be called wondrous works, out of the common course of providence, and quite beyond our expectation. 2. These wondrous works declare the nearness of his name, they shew that he himself is at hand, nigh to us in what we call upon him for; and that he is about to do some great things for his people, in pursuance of his purpose and promise. 3. When God's wondrous works declare the nearness of his name, it is our duty to give him thanks, again and again give him thanks.

2. He lays himself under an obligation to use his power well, pursuant to the great trust reposed in him, *ver. 2.* *When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly.* Here he takes it for granted, that God would in due time perfect that which concerned him, that though the congregation was very low in gathering to him, and great opposition was made to it, yet at length he shall receive it: for what God has spoken in his holiness he will perform by his wisdom and power. Being thus in expectation of the mercy, he promiseth to make conscience of his duty; when I am a judge I will judge, and judge uprightly; not as those that went before me, who either neglected judgment, or, which was worse, perverted it: either did no good with their power, or did hurt. Note, 1. Those that are advanced to posts of honour, must remember they are posts of service, and must set themselves with diligence and application of mind to do the work to which they are called. He doth not say, when I shall receive the congregation I will take my ease, and take state upon me, and leave the public business to others, but I will mind it myself. 2. Public trusts are to be managed with great integrity; they that judge must judge uprightly, according to the rules of justice, without respect of persons.

3. He promiseth himself that his government would be a public blessing to Israel, *ver. 3.* The present state of the kingdom was very bad, *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved,* and no marvel, when the former reign was so dissolute, all went to wreck and ruin. There was a general corruption of manners, for want of putting the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. They were divided one from another for want of concurring, as they ought to do, in the government God had appointed. They were all to pieces, two against three, and three against two, crumbled into factions and parties, which was likely to issue in their ruin: but I bear up the pillars of it. Even in Saul's time David did what he could towards the public welfare, but he hoped when he had himself received the congregation, he should do much more, and should not only prevent the public ruin, but recover the public strength and beauty. Now, (1.) See the mischief of parties, they melt and dissolve a land, and the inhabitants of it. (2.) See how much one head many times hold up. The fabric had sunk if David had not held up the pillars of it. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. The world and all the inhabitants of it were dissolved by man's apostasy, threatened the destruction of the whole creation; but Christ bore up the pillars of it, he saved the whole world from utter ruin, by saving his people from their sins, and into his hand the administration of the kingdom of providence is committed, for he upholds all things by the word of his power, *Heb. i. 3.*

4. He checks those that oppose his government, that were against his

succession



accession to it, and obstructed the administration of it, striving to keep up that vice and profaneness which he had made it his business to suppress, ver. 4, 5. *I said unto the fools deal not foolishly.* He had said so to them in Saul's time, when he had not power to restrain them, yet he had wisdom and grace to reprove them, and to give them good counsel; though they bore themselves high upon the favour of that unhappy prince, he cautioned them not to be too presumptuous. Or rather, he doth now say so to them. As soon as he came to the crown, he issued out a proclamation against vice and profaneness, and here we have the contents of it. (1.) To the simple sneaking sinners, the fools in Israel, that corrupted themselves, to them he said, *Deal not foolishly*: do not act so directly contrary both to your reason and to your interest as you do, while you walk contrary to the laws God has given Israel, and the promises he has made to David. Christ, the son of David, gives us this counsel, issues out this edict. *Deal not foolishly.* He who is made of God to us wisdom, bids us be wise for ourselves, and not make fools of ourselves. (2.) To the proud daring sinners, the wicked, that set God himself at defiance, he saith, *Lift not up the horn*; brag not of your power and prerogatives, persist not in your contumacy and contempt of the government set over you; *lift not up your horn on high*, as though you could have what you will, and do what you will; *speak not with a stiff neck*, in which is an iron snew, that will never bend to the will of God, in the government, for they that will not bend shall break; they whose necks are stiffened, are so to their own destruction. This is Christ's word of command in his gospel, that *every mountain will be brought low before him*, Isa. xl. 4. Let not the anti-christian powers with its heads and horns, lift up itself against him, for it shall certainly be broken in pieces: what is said with a stiff neck must be unsaid again with a broken heart, or we are undone. Pharaoh said with a stiff neck, *Who is the Lord?* But God made him know to his cost.

6. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another, 8. For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red: it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. 9. But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

In these verses we have two great doctrines laid down, and two good inferences drawn from them, for the confirmation of what he had before said.

1. Here are two great truths laid down concerning God's government of the world, which we ought to mix faith with, both pertinent to the occasion.

(1.) That from God alone kings receive their power, ver. 6, 7. and therefore to God alone David would give the praise of his advancement: therefore having his power from God he would use it for him, and there were fools that lifted up the horn against him. We see strange revolutions in states and kingdoms, and are surprised at the sudden disgrace of some, and elevations of others, we are all full of such changes when they happen; but here we are directed to look at the author of them, and are here taught where the original of power is, and whence promotion comes. Whence comes preferment in kingdoms, to the sovereignty of them? And whence comes preferment in kingdoms, to places of power and trust in them? The former depends not upon the will of the people, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look that are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin right. We are told, (1.) Negatively, which way we are not to look for the fountain of power: *Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert*, i. e. neither from the desert on the north of Jerusalem, nor from that on the south; so that the fair gale of preferment is not to be expected to blow from any point of the compass, but only from above, directly from thence. Men cannot gain promotion either by the wisdom or the wealth of the children of the east, or by the numerous forces of the isles of the Gentiles that lay westward, or those of Egypt or Arabia that lay south; no concurring smiles or second causes will raise men to preferment without the first cause. The learned Bishop Lloyd, (*Serm. in loc.*) gives this gloss upon it: all men took the original of power to be from heaven, but from whom there many knew not: the eastern nations, who are generally given to astrology, took it to come from their stars, especially the sun, their God; no, saith David, it comes neither from the east nor from the west, neither from the rising nor setting of such a planet, or such a constellation, nor from the south, nor from the exaltation of the sun, or any star in the mid-heaven; he mentions not the north, because none supposed it to come from thence: or, because the same word that signifies the north, signifies the secret place; and from the secret of God's council it doth come; or from the oracle in Zion, which lay on the north-side of Jerusalem. Note, No wind so good as to blow promotion, but as he directs who hath the wind in his skirts. (2.) Positively; *God is the judge*; the governor or umpire, when parties contend for prize, he puts down one, and sets up another, as he sees fit, so as to serve his own purposes, and bring to pass his own counsels. Herein he acts by prerogative, and is not accountable to us for any of these matters: nor is it any damage, danger or disgrace, that he, who is infinitely wise, holy and good, has an arbitrary and despotic power to set up and put down, whom and when and how he pleaseth. This is a good reason why magistrates should rule for God, as those that must give account to him, because it is by him that kings reign.

(2.) That from God alone all must receive their doom, ver. 8. *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup*, which he puts into the hands of the children of men, a cup of providence, mixed up (as he thinks fit) of many ingredients; a cup of affliction; the sufferings of Christ are called a cup, *Matt. xx. 22. John xiv. 11.* The judgments of God upon sinners are the cup of the Lord's right hand, *Hab. ii. 16.* The wine is red, noting the wrath of God which is infused into the judgments executed on sinners, and is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction, and the misery. It is red as fire, red as blood, for it burns, it kills. It is full of mixture prepared in wisdom, so as to answer the end: there are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction, when it is put into the hands of God's own people; mixtures of the curse when it is put into the hands of the wicked; it is wine mingled with gall. These vials, (1.) Are poured out upon all; see *Rev. xv. 7. —xvi. 1.* where we read of the angels pouring out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth. Some drops of this wrath may light on good people; when God's judgments are abroad, they have their share in common cala-

mities: but, (2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked. The calamity itself is but the vehicle into which the wrath and curse is infused, the top of which has little of the infection; but the sediment is pure wrath, and that shall fall to the share of sinners; they have the dregs of the cup now in tears of conscience; and hereafter in the torments of hell. They shall wring them out, that not a drop of the wrath may be left behind, and they shall drink them, for the curse shall enter into the bowels like water, and like oil into their bones. The cup of the Lord's indignation will be to them a cup of trembling, everlasting trembling, *Rev. xiv. 10.* The wicked man's cup while he prospers in the world is full of mixture, but the work is at the bottom. The wicked are reserved unto the day of judgment.

2. Here are two good practical inferences drawn from these great truths, and they are the same purposes of duty that he began the psalm with. (1.) This being so; he will praise God, and give him glory for the power to which he had advanced him, ver. 9. *I will declare for ever that which thy wondrous works declare*, ver. 1. He will praise God for his elevation, not only at first while the mercury was fresh, but for ever, so long as he lives; the exaltation of the Son of David, will be the subject of the saints everlasting praises. He will give glory to God, not only as his God, but as the God of Jacob; knowing it was for Jacob his servant's sake, and because he loved his people Israel, that he made him king over them. (2.) He will use the power with which he is intrusted for the great ends for which it was put into his hands, ver. 10. as before, ver. 2—4. According to the duty of the higher powers, (1.) He resolves to be a terror to evil doers, to humble their pride and break their power; though not all the heads, yet all the horns of the wicked will I cut off, with which they push their poor neighbours, I will disable them to do mischief. Thus God promises to raise up carpenters, which should *fray the horns of the Gentiles that had scattered Judah and Israel*, *Zech. i. 18—21.* (2.) He resolves to be a protection and praise to them that do well; *The horns of the righteous shall be exalted*, i. e. they shall be preferred and put into places of power; and they that are good, and have hearts to do good, shall not want ability and opportunity for it. This agrees with David's resolutions, *Psal. ci. 3. &c.* And herein David was a type of Christ, who with the breath of his mouth shall slay the wicked, but shall *exalt with honour the horn of the righteous*, *Psalms cxii. 9.*

## PSALM LXXVI.

This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some great victory obtained by the church over some threatening enemy or other, and designed to grace the triumph. The LXX. call it, *A song upon the Assyrians*; from whence many good interpreters conjecture, that it was penned when Sennacherib's army then besieging Jerusalem, was entirely cut off by a destroying angel in Hezekiah's time; and several passages in the psalm are very applicable to that work of wonder; but there was a religious triumph upon occasion of another victory in Jehoshaphat's time, which might as well be the subject of this psalm, 2 Chron. xx. 28. And it might be called a song of Asaph, because always sung by the sons of Asaph. Or it might be penned by Asaph that lived in David's time, upon occasion of the many triumphs with which God delighted to honour that reign. Upon occasion of this glorious victory, whosoever it was, (1.) The psalmist congratulates the happiness of the church in having God so nigh, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) He celebrates the glory of God's power, which this was an illustrious instance of, ver. 4, 5, 6. (3.) He infers from hence what reason all have to fear before him, ver. 7, 8, 9. And (4.) What reason his people have to trust in him, and to pay their vows to him, ver. 10, 11, 12. It is a psalm proper for a thanksgiving day upon the account of public successes, and not improper at other times, because it is never out of season to glorify God for the great things he has done for his church formerly, especially for the victories of the Redeemer over the powers of darkness, which all those Old Testament victories were types of, at least those that are celebrated in the psalms.

¶ To the chief musician upon Neginoth,

¶ A PSALM OR SONG OF ASAPH.

1. IN Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion. 3. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah. 4. Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. 5. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. 6. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

The church is here triumphant, even in the midst of its militant state. The psalmist in the church's name, triumphs here in God, the center of all our triumphs.

1. In the revelation God had made of himself to them, ver. 2. It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel, that among them God is known, and where he is known, his name will be great. God is known, as he is pleased to make himself known; and they are happy to whom he discovers himself: Happy people that have their land filled with the knowledge of God; happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge. In Judah God was known so as he was not known in other nations, which made the favour the more obliging, that it was distinguishing. *Psal. cxlvii. 10, 20.*

2. In the tokens of God's special presence with them in his ordinances, ver. 2. In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was known, and his name was great; but in Salem, in Zion, was his tabernacle and his dwelling-place, there he kept court, there received the homage of his people by their sacrifices, and entertained them by the feasts upon the sacrifices, thither they came to address themselves to him, and thence by his oracles he issued out his orders; there he recorded his name; and of that place he said, *Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.* It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances; but his dwelling place is a tabernacle, a moveable dwelling; yet a little while is that light with us.

3. In the victories they had obtained over their enemies, ver. 3. *There brake he the arrows of the bow.* Observe how threatening the danger was; though Judah and Israel, Salem and Zion, were thus privileged, yet war is raised against them, and the weapons of war are furnished: Here is bow and arrows, shield and sword, and all for battle, but all are broken and rendered useless. And it was done there, (1.) In Judah and Israel, in fa-



your of that people near to God. While the weapons of war were used against other nations, they answered their end, but when turned against that holy nation, they were broken presently. The Chaldeo paraphrased it thus, When the house of Israel did his will, he placed his majesty among them, and there he broke the arrows of the bow; while they kept close to his service they were great and safe, and every thing went well with them. Or, (2.) In the tabernacle and dwelling place in Zion, there he brake the arrows of the bow; it was done in the field of battle, and yet it is said to be done in the sanctuary, because done in answer to the prayers which there God's people made to him, and in performance of the promises which he there made to them; of both which see that instance, 2 Chron. xx. 5—14. Public successes are owing as much to what is done in the church, as to what is done in the camp.

Now this victory redounded very much,

1. To the immortal honour of Israel's God, ver. 4. *Thou art*, and hast manifested thyself to be more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. (1.) Than the great and mighty ones of the earth in general, who are high, and think themselves firmly fixed like mountains, but are really mountains of prey, oppressive to all about them. It is their glory to destroy; it is thine to deliver. (2.) Than our invaders in particular, when they besieged the cities of Judah, they cast up mounts against them, and raised batteries; but thou art more able to protect us, than they are to annoy us. Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly, it will appear that God is above them.

2. To the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, ver. 5, 6. They were stout-hearted, men of great courage and resolution, flushed with their former victories, enraged against Israel, confident of success; they were men of might, robust and fit for service, they had chariots and horses, which were then greatly valued and trusted to in war, Psal. xx. 7. But all this force was of no force when it was levelled against Jerusalem. (1.) The stout-hearted have dispoiled and disarmed themselves; (so some read it) and when God pleaseth, he can make his enemies to weaken and destroy themselves. They have slept, not the sleep of the righteous, who sleep in Jesus, but their sleep, the sleep of sinners, that shall wake to everlasting shame and contempt. (2.) The men of might are as far to seek for their hands, as the stout-hearted were for their spirit. As the bold men are cowed, so the strong men are lamed, and cannot so much as find their hands, to save their own heads, much less to hurt their enemies. (3.) The chariots and horses may be truly said to be cast into a dead sleep, when their drivers and their riders were so. God did but speak the word, as the God of Jacob that commands deliverances from Jacob, and at his rebuke the chariot and horses were both cast into a dead sleep; when the men were laid dead upon the spot by the destroying angel, the chariot and horses were not at all formidable. See the power and efficacy of God's rebukes. With what pleasure may we Christians apply all this to the advantages we enjoy by the Redeemer! It is through him that God is known; it is in him that God's name is great; to him it is owing that God has a tabernacle, and a dwelling-place in his church. He it was that vanquished the strong man armed, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly.

7. Thou, even thou, art to be feared, and who may stand in thy fight when once thou art angry? 8. Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still. 9. When God arose to judgment to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. 10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. 11. Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God; let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. 12. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

This glorious victory with which God had graced and blessed his church, is here made to speak three things.

1. Terror to God's enemies, ver. 7, 8, 9. *Thou, even thou, art to be feared*; thy majesty is to be revered, thy sovereignty to be submitted to, and thy justice to be dreaded by those that have offended thee. Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the great God. (1.) Let all be afraid of his wrath against the daring impiety of sinners; *Who may stand in thy fight from the minute that thou art angry?* If God be a consuming fire, how can chaff and stubble stand before him? though his anger be kindled but a little, Psal. ii. 12. (2.) Let all be afraid of his jealousy for oppressed innocency, and the injured cause of his own people; *Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven, when thou didst arise to save all the meek of the earth*, ver. 8, 9, and then *the earth feared and was still*, waiting what would be the issue of those glorious appearances of thine. Note, 1. God's people are the meek of the earth, Zeph. ii. 3. the quiet in the land, Psal. xxxv. 20. that can bear any wrong, but do none. 2. Though the meek of the earth are by their meekness exposed to injury, yet God will sooner or later appear for their salvation, and plead their cause. 3. When God comes to save all the meek of the earth he will cause judgment to be heard from heaven, i. e. He will make the world know that he is angry at the oppressors of his people, and takes what is done against them, as done against himself. The righteous God long seems to keep silence, yet sooner or later he will make judgment to be heard. 4. When God is speaking judgment from heaven, it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence; *The earth feared and was still*, as silence is made by proclamation when the court sits. *Be still and know that I am God*, Psal. xli. 10. *Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up to judgment*, Zech. ii. 13. Those that suppose this psalm to have been penned upon the occasion of the routing of Sennacherib's army, take it for granted, that the descent of the destroying angel who did the execution, was accompanied with thunder, by which God caused judgment to be heard from heaven, and that the earth feared, i. e. there was an earthquake, but it was soon over. But this is altogether uncertain.

2. Comfort to God's people, ver. 10. We live in a very angry provoking world, we feel much many times, and are apt to fear more from the wrath of man, which seems boundless. But this is a great comfort to us, (1.) That as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time, he will make it turn to his praise, will bring honour to himself, and serve his own purposes by it: *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee*, not only by the checks given to it, when it shall be forced to confess its own impotency, but even by the losses given to it for a time: The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies, are made to redound to the glory of God and his grace; and the more the heathen rage and plot against the Lord and his anointed, the more will God be praised for setting his king upon the holy hill of Zion in spite of them, Psal. ii. 1—6.

When the heavenly hosts make this the matter of their thanksgiving-songs, that God has taken to him his great power, and has reigned, though the nations were angry, Rev. xi. 17, 18. then the wrath of man adds lustre to the praises of God. (2.) That what will not turn to his praise shall not be suffered to break out; *the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*. Men must never permit sin, because they cannot check it when they will; but God can. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he doth to the raging sea. *Hitherto it shall come, and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed*. God restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's rage, for he put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his jaws, Isa. xxxvii. 29, and though he permitted him to stalk big, he restrained him from doing what he designed.

3. Duty to all, ver. 11, 12. Let all submit themselves to this great God, and become his loyal subjects.

Observe, 1. The duty required of us all, all that are about him, that have any dependence upon him, or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that has not? We are therefore every one of us commanded to do our homage to the King of Kings, *Vow and pray*, i. e. take an oath of allegiance to him, and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow. Bind your souls with a bond to him (for that is the nature of a vow) and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves; for *better is it not to vow, than to vow and not to pay*. And having taken him for our king, let us bring presents to him, as subjects to their sovereign, 1 Sam. x. 17. *Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land*, Isa. xvi. 1. Not that God needs any present we can bring or can be benefited by it; but thus we must give him honour, and own that we have our all from him. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God. (2.) The reason to enforce this duty; *Render to all their due, fear to whom fear is due*; and is it not due to God? Yes, (1.) He ought to be feared; he is the fear, so the word is; his name is glorious and fearful; and he is the proper object of our fear; with him is terrible majesty. The God of Abraham is called, *the fear of Isaac*, Gen. xxxi. 42, and we are commanded to *make him our fear*, Isa. viii. 13. When we bring presents to him, we must have an eye to him as greatly to be feared; for he is terrible in his holy places. (2.) He will be feared, even by those who think it their own sole prerogative to be feared, ver. 12. *He shall cut off the spirit of princes*; he shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk, or a bunch of grapes from the vine, so the word signifies. He can dispirit those that are most daring, and make them heartless; for he is, or will be, *terrible to the kings of the earth*; and sooner or later, if they be not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in vain to rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from his wrath. Rev. vi. 16. Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom, as it is our duty, to submit to him.

P S A L M LXXVII.

This psalm, according to the method of many other psalms, begins with sorrowful complaints, but ends with comfortable encouragements. The complaints seem to be of personal grievances, but the encouragements relate to the public concerns of the church, so that it is not certain, whether it was penned upon a personal or public account: If they were private troubles that he was groaning under, it teacheth us, that what God has wrought for his church in general, may be improved for the comfort of particular believers; if it was some public calamity that he is here lamenting, his speaking of it so feelingly as if it had been some particular trouble of his own, shews how much we should lay to heart the interests of the church of God, and make them our own. One of the rabbins saith, this psalm is spoken in the dialect of the captives; and therefore some think it was penned in the captivity in Babylon. (1.) The psalmist complains here of the deep impressions which his troubles made upon his spirits, and the temptation he was in to despair of relief, ver. 1—10. (2.) He encourageth himself to hope that it would be well at last, by the remembrance of God's former appearances for the help of his people, of which he gives several instances, ver. 11—20. In singing this psalm we must take shame to ourselves for our sinful distrusts of God, and of his providence and promise, and give to him the glory of his power and goodness by a thankful commemoration of what he has done for us formerly, and a cheerful dependence on him for the future.

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. I CRIED unto God with my voice: even unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me. 2. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my soul refused to be comforted. 3. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. 4. Thou holdest mine eyes, waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. 5. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. 6. I called to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search. 7. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? 9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. 10. And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.

We have here the lively portraiture of a good man under prevailing melancholy, fallen into, and sinking in that horrible pit, and that miry clay, but struggling to get out: Drooping fancies that are of a sorrowful spirit, may here in this glass see their own faces. The conflict which the psalmist had with his griefs and fears, seem to have been over when he penned this record of it; for he saith, ver. 1. *I cried unto God and he gave ear unto me*; which while the struggle lasted he had not the comfortable sense of, as he had afterwards; but he inserts it in the beginning of his narrative, as an intimation that his trouble did not end in despair; for God heard him, and at length he knew that he heard him. Observe;

1. His melancholy prayers: Being afflicted he prayed, Jer. v. 13. and being in an agony, he prayed most earnestly, ver. 1. *My voice was unto God*,



God, and I cried, even with my voice unto God, he was full of complaints, but he directed them to God, and turned them all into prayers, vocal prayers, very earnest and importunate. Thus he gave vent to his grief, and gained some ease; and thus he took the right way in order to relief, ver. 2. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. Note, Days of trouble must be days of prayer, days of inward trouble especially, when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversion of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away. My hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not; so Dr. Hammond reads the following words, as speaking the incessant importunity of his prayers. Compare Psal. cxliii. 5, 6.

2. His melancholy grief: Grief may then be called melancholy indeed, (1.) When it admits of no intermission; such was his, my sore or wound ran in the night and bled inwardly, and it ceased not; no, not in the time appointed for rest and sleep. (2.) When it admits of no consolation; and that also was his case: My soul refused to be comforted; he had no mind to hearken to those that would be his comforters. As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart. Prov. xv. 20. Nor had he any mind to think of those things that would be his comforts; he put them far from him, as one that indulged himself in sorrow. Those that are in sorrow upon any account, do not only prejudice themselves, but affront God, if they refuse to be comforted.

3. His melancholy musings; He pored so much upon the trouble, whatever it was, personal or public, that (1.) The methods that should have relieved him, did but increase his grief, ver. 3. (1.) One would have thought that the remembrance of God should have comforted him, but it did not; I remembered God and was troubled, as poor Job, chap. xxiii. 15. I am troubled at his presence, when I consider, I am afraid of him. When he remembered God, his thoughts fastened only upon his justice and wrath and dreadful majesty, and thus God himself became a terror to him. (2.) One would have thought that pouring out his soul before God should have given him ease, but it did not; he complained, and yet his spirit was overwhelmed, and sunk under the load.

(2.) The means of his present relief were denied him, ver. 4. He could not sleep; which if it be quiet and refreshing, is a parenthesis to our griefs and cares; Thou holdest mine eyes waking with thy terrors, which makes me full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day. He could not speak by reason of the disorder of his thoughts, and the tumult of his spirits, and the mighty confusion his mind was in; he kept silence even from good, while his heart was hot within him; he was ready to burst like a new bottle, Job xxxiii. 19. and yet so troubled, that he could not speak and refresh himself. And grief never preys so much upon the spirits, as when it is thus smothered and pent up.

4. His melancholy reflections, ver. 5, 6. I have considered the days of old, and compared them with the present days, and our former prosperity doth but aggravate our present calamities; for we see not the wonders our fathers told us of. Melancholy people are to pore altogether upon the days of old, and the years of ancient times, and to magnify them, for the justifying of their own uneasiness and discontent at the present posture of affairs. But say not thou, that the former days were better than these, because it is more than thou knowest whether they were or no, Eccles. vii. 10. Rather let the remembrance of the comforts we have lost, make us unthankful for those that are left, or impatient under our crosses.

Particularly, he called to remembrance his song in the night, the comforts with which he had supported himself in his former sorrows and entertained himself in his former solitude, these songs he remembered and tried if he could not sing them over again; but he was out of tune for them, and the remembrance of them did but pour out his soul in him; Psalm xlii. 4. See Job xxxv. 10.

5. His melancholy fears and apprehensions; I commune with mine own heart, ver. 6. Come, my soul, what will be the issue of these things? What can I think of them, and what can I expect they will come to at last? I made diligent search into the causes of my trouble, enquiring wherefore God contended with me, and what would be the consequences of it? And thus I began to reason; Will the Lord cast off for ever, as he doth for the present? He is not now favourable, and will he be favourable no more? His mercy is now gone, and it is clean gone for ever? His promise now fails, and doth it fail for evermore? God is not now gracious, but hath he forgotten to be gracious? His tender mercies have been withheld, perhaps in wisdom, but are they shut up, shut up in anger? ver. 7, 8, 9. This is the language of a desolate deserted soul, now walking in darkness, and having no light; a case not uncommon, even with those that fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his servant, Isa. i. 10. He may here be looked upon (1.) As groaning under a sore trouble; God hid his face from him and withdrew the usual tokens of his favour. Note, Spiritual trouble is of all other most grievous to a gracious soul; nothing wounds and pierceth it like the apprehensions of God's being angry; the suspending of his favour, and the suspending of his promise; this wounds the spirit, and who can bear that? (2.) As grappling with a strong temptation: Note, God's own people in a cloudy and dark day, may be tempted to make desperate conclusions about their own spiritual state, and the condition of God's church and kingdom in the world, and as to both, to give up all for gone. We may be tempted to think that God has abandoned us and cast us off; that the covenant of grace fails us, and that the tender mercies of our God shall be for ever withheld from us. But we must not give way to such suggestions as these; If fear and melancholy ask such peevish questions, let faith answer them from the Scripture; Will the Lord cast off for ever? God forbid, Rom. xi. 1. No, The Lord will not cast off his people; Psal. xciv. 14. Will he be favourable no more? Yes, he will, for though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, Lam. iii. 32. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? No; his mercy endureth for ever; as it is from everlasting, it is to everlasting; Psal. ciii. 17. Doth his promise fail for evermore? No; it is impossible for God to lie, Heb. vi. 18. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? No; he cannot deny himself, and his own name which he hath proclaimed gracious and merciful, Exod. xxxiv. 6. Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? No; they are new every morning, Lam. iii. 22. and therefore, How shall I give thee up Ephraim? Hos. xi. 8, 9.

Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when on a sudden he first checked himself with that word; Selah; stop there, go no farther, let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises; and he then chid himself, ver. 10. I said, this is mine infirmity. He is soon aware that it is not well said, and therefore, Why art thou cast down, O my soul? I said this in my affliction; (so some understand it) this is the calamity that falls to my lot, and I must make the best of it; every one has his affliction, his trouble in the flesh; and this is mine, the cross I must take up. Or rather, this is my sin, it is mine iniquity: the plague of my own heart. These doubts and fears proceed from the want and weakness of faith, and the corruption of a disordered mind. Note, (1.) We all know that ill by ourselves, of which we must say this is our infirmity, a sin that most easily befalls

us. (2.) Despondency of spirit and distrust of God under affliction, are too often the infirmities of good people, and, as such, are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame, as by the psalmist here; this is my infirmity. And when at any time it is working in us we must thus suppress the rising of it, and not suffer the evil spirit to speak. We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as the psalmist here, But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. He had been considering the years of ancient times, ver. 5. the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remembrance of which did only add to his grief; but now he considered them, as the years of the right hand of the most High; that those blessings of ancient times came from the ancient of days, from the power and sovereign disposal of his right hand who is over all God blessed for ever, and this satisfied him; for may not the most High with his right hand make what changes he pleaseth?

11. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. 13. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? 14. Thou art the God that doest wonders; thou hast declared thy strength among the people. 15. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. 16. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee: they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. 17. The clouds poured out water, the skies sent out a sound; thine arrows also went abroad. 18. The voice of the thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook. 19. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy foot-steps are not known. 20. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The psalmist here recovers himself out of the great distress and plague he was in, and blencheth his own fears of God's casting off his people, by the remembrance of the great things he had done for them formerly, which though he had in vain tried to quiet himself with, ver. 5, 6. yet he tried again, and upon this second trial found it not in vain: it is good to persevere in the proper means for the strengthening of faith, though they do not prove effectual at first. I will remember, surely I will, what God has done for his people of old, till I can from thence infer a happy issue of the present dark dispensations, ver. 11, 12. Note, 1. The works of the Lord for his people have been wondrous works. 2. They are recorded for us, that they may be remembered by us. 3. That we may have benefit by the remembrance of them, we must meditate upon them, and dwell upon them in our thoughts, and must talk of them that we may inform ourselves and others further concerning them. 4. The due remembrance of the work of God will be a powerful antidote against distrust of his promise and goodness; for he is God, and changeth not: If he begin he will finish his work, and bring forth the top-stone.

Two things in general satisfied him very much.

(1.) That God's way is in the sanctuary, ver. 13. It is in holiness (so some.) When we cannot solve the particular difficulties that may arise in our constructions of the divine providence, this we are sure of in general, that God is holy in all his works, that they are all worthy of himself, and consonant to the eternal purity and rectitude of his nature. He has holy ends in all he doth, and will be sanctified in every dispensation of his providence. His way is according to his promise which he has spoken in his holiness, and made known in the sanctuary; what he has done is according to what he hath said, and may be construed by it; and from what he hath said, we may easily gather, that he will not cast off his people for ever. God's way is for the sanctuary, and for the benefit of it: All he doth is intended for the good of his church.

(2.) That God's way is in the sea; though God is holy, just and good in all he doth, yet we cannot give an account of the reasons of his proceedings, nor make any certain judgment of his designs; his path is in the great waters, and his foot-steps are not known, ver. 19. God's ways are like the deep waters which cannot be fathomed, Psalm xxxvi. 6. Like the way of a ship in the sea, which cannot be tracked, Prov. xxx. 18, 19. God's proceedings are always to be acquiesced in, but cannot always be accounted for.

He instanceth in some particulars, for which he goes as far back as the infancy of the Jewish church, and from which he gathers, (1.) That there is no God to be compared with the God of Israel, ver. 13. Who is so great a God as our God? Let us first give to God the glory of the great things he has done for his people, and acknowledge him therein great above all comparison; and then we may take to ourselves the comfort of what he hath done, and encourage ourselves with it. (2.) That he is a God of almighty power, ver. 14. Thou art the God that alone doest wonders, above the power of any creature, thou hast visibly and beyond any contradiction, declared thy strength among the people. What God has done for his church, has been a standing declaration of his almighty power, for therein he has made bare his everlasting arm.

(1.) God brought Israel out of Egypt, ver. 15. This was the beginning of mercy to them, and was yearly to be commemorated among them in the passover. Thou hast with thine arm, stretched out in so many miracles, redeemed thy people out of the hand of the Egyptians. Though they were delivered by power, yet they are said to be redeemed as if it had been done by price, because it was typical of the great redemption which was to be wrought out in the fulness of time both by price and power. Those that were redeemed, are here called not only the sons of Jacob, to whom the promise was made, but of Joseph also, who had a most firm and lively belief of the performance of it: for when he was dying he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones.

(2.) He divided the Red-sea before them, ver. 16. The waters gave way, and a lane was made through that crowd instantly, as if they had seen God himself at the head of the armies of Israel, and had retired for fear of him. Not only the surface of the waters, but the depths were troubled, and opened to the right and to the left, in obedience to his word of command.

(3.) He destroyed the Egyptians, ver. 17. The clouds poured out water upon them, while the pillar of fire, like an umbrella over the camp of Israel, sheltered it from the shower, in which, as in the deluge, the waters that were above the firmament concurred with those that were beneath the firmament to destroy the rebels. Then the skies sent out a sound, thine arrows also went abroad, which is explained, ver. 18. The voice of thy thunder was heard in the heaven, that is, the sound which the skies sent forth; the



the lightnings lightened the world, those are the arrows that went abroad, by which the host of the Egyptians was discomfited, with so much terror, that the earth of the adjacent coast shook and trembled. Thus God's way was in the sea, for the destruction of his enemies, as well as for the salvation of his people; and yet when the waters returned to their place, his footsteps were not known, ver. 19. There was no mark set upon the place, as there was afterwards in Jordan, Josh. iv. 19. We do not read in the story of Israel's passing through the Red-sea, that there were thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake; yet there might be, and Josephus saith there were such displays of the divine terror upon that occasion. But it may refer to the thunders, lightnings, and earthquakes that were at mount Sinai, when the law was given.

(4) He took his people Israel under his own conduct and protection, ver. 20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock.* They being weak and helpless, and apt to wander like a flock of sheep, and lying exposed to the beaus of prey, God went before them with all the care and tenderness of a shepherd, that they might not miscary. The pillar of cloud and fire led them, yet that is not here taken notice of, but the agency of Moses and Aaron, by whose hand God led them; they could not do it without God, but God did it with and by them. Moses was their governor, Aaron their high-priest, they were guides, overseers, and rulers to Israel, and by them God led them. The right and happy administration of the two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry, are, though not so great a miracle, yet as great a mercy to any people, as the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness.

This psalm concludes abruptly, and doth not apply those ancient instances of God's power to the present distresses of the church, as one might have expected: But as soon as the good man began to meditate on these things, he found he had gained his point; his very entrance upon this matter gave him light and joy (Psalm cxix. 130.) his fears suddenly and strangely vanished, so that he needed to go no further; he went his way and did not, and his countenance was no more sad.

P S A L M LXXVIII.

This psalm is historical; it is a narrative of the great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel; the great sins wherewith they had provoked him, and the many tokens of his displeasure they had been under for their sins. The psalmist began in the foregoing psalm to relate God's wonders of old, for his own encouragement, in a difficult time; there he broke off abruptly, but here resumes the subject, for the edification of the church, and enlargeth much upon it; shewing not only how good God has been to them, which was an earnest of further finishing mercy; but how basely they had carried themselves to God, which justified him in correcting them as he did at this time, and forbade all complaints. Here is, (1.) The preface to this church history, commanding the attention of the present age to it, and recommending it to the study of the generations to come, ver. 1—8. (2.) The history itself from Moses to David; it is put into a psalm or song, that it might be the better remembered, and transmitted to posterity; and that the singing of it might affect them, with the things here related, more than they would be with a bare narrative of them: The general scope of this psalm we have, ver. 9, 10, 11. where notice is taken of the present rebukes they were under, ver. 9. the sin which brought them under those rebukes, ver. 10. and the mercies of God to them formerly, which aggravated that sin, ver. 11. As to the particulars, we are here told, (1.) What wonderful works God had wrought for them in bringing them out of Egypt, ver. 12—16. providing for them in the wilderness, ver. 23—29. plaguing and ruining their enemies, ver. 43—53. and at length putting them in possession of the land of promise, ver. 54, 55. (2.) How ungrateful they were to God for his favours to them, and how many and great provocations they were guilty of. How they murmured against God and distrusted him, ver. 17—20. and did but counterfeit repentance, and submission when he punished them, ver. 34—37. thus grieving and tempting him, ver. 40—42. How they affronted God with their idolatries after they came to Canaan, ver. 56—58. (3.) How God had justly punished them for their sins, ver. 21, 22. in the wilderness, making their sin their punishment, ver. 29—33. and now of late when the ark was taken by the Philistines, ver. 59—64. (4.) How graciously God had spared them and returned in mercy to them, notwithstanding their provocations. He had forgiven them formerly, ver. 38, 39. and now of late had removed the judgments they had brought upon themselves, and brought them under a happy establishment both in church and state, ver. 65—72. As the general scope of this psalm may be of use to us in the singing of it, to put us upon recollecting what God has done for us, and for his church formerly, and what we have done against him, so the particulars also may be of use to us, for warning against those sins of unbelief and ingratitude, which Israel of old was notoriously guilty of, and the record of which was preserved for our learning; these things happened unto them for examples, 1 Cor. x. 11. Heb. iv. 11.

MASCHIL OF ASAPH.

1. **G**IVE ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: 3. Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. 4. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come, the praises of the LORD; and his strength and his wonderful works that he hath done. 5. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers: that they should make them known to their children. 6. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise and declare them to their children: 7. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments: 8. And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation: a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

These verses, which contain the preface to this history, shew that the psalm answers the title, it is indeed Maschil, a psalm to give instruction, if we receive not the instruction it gives, it is our own fault.

Here, (1.) The psalmist demands attention to what he wrote, ver. 1. *Give ear, O my people, to my law:* Some make these the psalmist's words; David as a king, or Asaph, in his name, as his secretary of state, or scribe to the sweet-singer of Israel, here calls upon the people, as his people committed to his charge, to give ear to his law. He calls his instructions his law or edict; such was their commanding force in themselves, every good truth received in the light and love of it will have the power of the law upon the conscience; yet that was not all, David was a king, and he would interpose his royal power for the edification of his people: If God, by his grace, make great men good men, they will be capable of doing more good than others, because their word will be a law to all about them; who must therefore give ear, and hearken: for to what purpose is divine revelation brought to our ears, if we will not incline our ears to it, both humble ourselves, and engage ourselves to hear it and heed it? Or, the psalmist being a prophet speaks as God's mouth, and so calls them his people and demands subjection to what was said as to a law. Let him that has an ear thus hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, Rev. ii. 7.

Several reasons are given why we should diligently attend to that which is here related.

1. The things here discoursed of are weighty, and deserve consideration, strange, and need it, ver. 2. *I will open my mouth in a parable,* in that which is sublime and uncommon, but very excellent and well worthy your attention; *I will utter dark sayings,* which challenge your most serious regard, as much as the enigmas with which the eastern princes and learned men used to pose one another. These are called dark sayings, not because they are hard to be understood, but because they are greatly to be admired, and carefully to be looked into. This is said to be fulfilled in the parables which our Saviour put forth, Matt. xiii. 35. which were (as this) representations of the state of the kingdom of God among men.

(2.) They are the monuments of antiquity: *Dark sayings of old, which our fathers have told us,* ver. 3. They are things of undoubted certainty, we have heard them and known them, and there is no room left to question the truth of them: The gospel of Luke is called a *declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us*, Luke i. 1. so were the things here related. The honour we owe to our parents and ancestors obligeth us to attend to that which our fathers have told us; and as far as it appears to be true and good, to receive it with so much the more reverence and regard.

3. They are to be transmitted to posterity, and it lies as a charge upon us carefully to hand them down; ver. 4. *Because our fathers told them us, we will not hide them from their children.* Our children are called theirs, for they were in care for their feet's feet, and looked upon them as theirs; and in teaching our children the knowledge of God, we repay to our parents some of that debt we owe to them for teaching us. Nay, if we have no children of our own, we must declare the things of God to their children, the children of others. Our care must be for posterity in general, and not only for our own posterity. And for the generation to come hereafter, the children that shall be born, as well for the generation that is next rising up, and the children that are born. That which we are to transmit to our children, is not only the knowledge of languages, arts and sciences, their liberty and property, but especially the praises of the Lord, and his strength appearing in the wonderful works that he has done. Our great care must be to lodge our religion, that great depositum, pure and entire in the hands of those that succeed us.

There are two things, the full and clear knowledge of which we must preserve the entail of to our heirs.

1. The law of God; for this was given with a particular charge to teach it diligently to their children, ver. 5. *He established a testimony or covenant, and enacted a law in Jacob and Israel, gave them precepts and promises, which he commanded them to make known to their children*, Deut. vi. 7—20. The church of God, as the historian saith to the Roman commonwealth, was not to be *res unius aetatis*, a business of one age, but was to be kept up from one generation to another; and therefore, as God provided for a succession of ministers in the tribe of Levi, and the house of Aaron, so he appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law; and when they were grown up, they must arise, and declare them to their children, ver. 6. That as one generation of God's servants and worshippers passeth away, another generation may come, and the church, as the earth, may abide for ever; and thus God's name among men may be as the days of heaven.

2. The providences of God concerning them, both in mercy and in judgment. The former seems to be mentioned for the sake of this; since God gave order, that this law should be made known to posterity, it is requisite that with them his works also should be made known, the fulfilling of the promises made to the obedient, and the threatenings denounced against the disobedient. Let these be told to our children and our children's children.

1. That they may take encouragement to conform themselves to the will of God; ver. 7. That not forgetting the works of God wrought in former days, they might set their hope in God, and keep his commandments, might make his command their rule, and his covenant their stay; and those only may with confidence hope for God's salvation, that make conscience of doing his commandments. The works of God duly considered, will very much strengthen our resolution both to set our hope in him, and to keep his commandments, for he is able to bear us out in both.

2. That they may take warning not to conform themselves to the example of their fathers, ver. 8. *That they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.* See here, (1.) What was the character of their fathers, though they were the seed of Abraham, taken into covenant with God, and, for ought we know, the only professing people he had then in the world, yet they were stubborn and rebellious, and walked contrary to God in direct opposition to his will: they did indeed profess relation to him, but they did not set their hearts right, they were not cordial in their engagements to God, nor inward with him in their worship of him, and therefore their spirit was not stedfast with him, but upon every occasion they flew off from him. Note, Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy; those that do not set their hearts right, will not be stedfast with God, but play fast and loose. (2.) What was a charge to the children; *That they be not as their fathers.* Note, Those that are descended from wicked and ungodly ancestors, if they will but consider the word and works of God, will see reason enough not to tread in their steps; It will be no excuse for a vain conversation, that it was received by tradition from our fathers, 1 Pet. i. 18. For what we know of them that was ill, must be an admonition to us, that we dread that which was so pernicious to them, as we would shun those courses which they took that were ruinous to their health or estates.

9. The children of Ephraim being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. 10. They



They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law: 11. And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them. 12. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. 13. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through, and he made the waters to stand as an heap. 14. In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. 15. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. 16. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. 17. And they sinned yet more against him, by provoking the most High in the wilderness. 18. And they tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust. 19. Yea, they spake against God: they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? 20. Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people: 21. Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth, so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel. 22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: 23. Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven. 24. And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. 25. Man did eat angels food: he sent them meat to the full. 26. He caused an east-wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. 27. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the fand of the sea. 28. And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. 29. So they did eat, and were well-filled: for he gave them their own desire; 30. They were not estranged from their lust; but while their meat was yet in their mouths, 31. The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. 32. For all this they sinned still: and believed not for his wondrous works. 33. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. 34. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. 35. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. 36. Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. 37. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. 38. But he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. 39. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away and cometh not again.

In these verses,

1. The psalmist observes the late rebukes of providence that the people of Israel had been under, which they had brought upon themselves by their dealing treacherously with God, ver. 9, 10, 11. The children of Ephraim in which tribe Shiloh was, though they were well armed, and shot with bows, yet turned back in the day of battle. This seems to refer to that shameful defeat which the Philistines gave them in Eli's time, when they took the ark prisoner, 1 Sam. iv. 10, 11. Which the psalmist here begins to speak of, and after long digression returns to it again, ver. 61. And well might that event be thus fresh in mind in David's time above forty years after, for the ark which in that memorable battle was seized by the Philistines, though it was quickly brought out of captivity, was never brought out of obscurity, till David fetched it from Kirjath-jearim to his own city. Observe, (1.) The shameful cowardice of the children of Ephraim, that warlike tribe, so famed for valiant men, Joshua's tribe; the children of that tribe, though as well armed as ever, yet turned back when they came to face the enemy. Note, Weapons of war stand men in little stead without a martial spirit, and that is gone if God be gone. Sin dispirits man, and takes away the heart. (2.) The causes of their cowardice which were no less shameful, and these were, 1. A shameful violation of God's law, and their covenant with him, ver. 10. They were basely treacherous and perfidious, for they kept not the covenant of God, and basely stubborn and rebellious, (as they were described, ver. 8.) for they peremptorily refused to walk in his law, and in effect told him to his face they would not be ruled by him. 2. A shameful ingratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon them. They forgot his works and his wonders, his works of wonder which they ought to have admired, ver. 11. Note, Our forgetfulness of God's works is at the bottom of our disobedience to his laws.

2. He takes occasion from hence to consult precedents, and to compare this with their fathers case; who were in like manner unmindful of God's mercies to them, and ungrateful to their founder and great benefactor, and were therefore often brought under his displeasure. The narrative in these verses is very observable, for it relates a kind of struggle between God's goodness, and man's badness, and mercy at length rejoiceth against judgment.

1. God did great things for his people Israel, when he first incorporated them and formed them into a people. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, and not only in their sight, but in their cause, and for their benefit, so strange, so kind, that one would think they should never be forgotten. What he did for them in the land of Egypt is only mentioned here, ver. 12. but afterwards resumed, ver. 43. And here he goes on to

shew, (1.) How he made a lane for them through the Red-sea, and caused them, i. e. gave them courage to pass through, though the waters stood over their heads as an heap, ver. 13. see Isa. lxiii. 12, 13, where God is said to lead them by the hand, as it were through the deep, that they should not stumble. (2.) How he provided a guide for them, through the untrodden paths of the wilderness, ver. 14. He led them step by step, in the day time by a cloud, which also sheltered them from the heat, and all the night with the light of fire, which perhaps warmed the air, however, made the darkness of night the less frightful, and perhaps kept off wild beasts, Zech. ii. 5. (3.) How he furnished their camp with fresh water in a dry and thirsty land where no water was; not by opening the bottles of heaven, that had been a common way, but by breaching a rock, ver. 15, 16. He clove the rocks in the wilderness, which yielded water, though they were not capable of receiving it either from the clouds above, or the springs beneath. Out of the dry and hard rock he gave them drink, not distilled as out of an alembic, drop by drop, but in streams running down like rivers, and as out of the great depths; God gives abundantly, and is rich in mercy; he gives seasonably, and sometimes makes us to feel the want of mercies, that we may the better know the worth of them. This water which God gave Israel out of the rock was the more valuable, because it was spiritual drink, and that rock was Christ.

2. When God began thus to bless them, they began to affront him, ver. 17. They sinned yet more against him, more than they had done in Egypt, though there they were bad enough, Ezek. xx. 8. They bore the miseries of their servitude better than the difficulties of their deliverance; and never murmured at their task masters, so as they did at Moses and Aaron, as if they were delivered to all these abominations, Jer. vii. 10. As sin sometimes takes occasion by the commandment, so at other times it takes occasion by the deliverance to become more exceeding sinful; they provoked the most High; though he is most high, and they knew themselves an unequal match for him, yet they provoked him, and even bid defiance to his justice. And this in the wilderness, where he had them at his mercy, and therefore they were bound in interest to please him; and where he shewed them so much mercy, and therefore they were bound in gratitude to please him; yet there they said and did that which they knew would provoke him; they tempted God in their heart, ver. 18. Their sin began in their heart, and thence it took its malignity. They do always err in their heart, Heb. iii. 10. Thus they tempted God, tried his patience to the utmost, whether he would bear with them or no; and in effect bid him do his worst. Two ways they provoked him,

(1.) By desiring, or rather demanding, that which he had not thought fit to give them; they asked meat for their lust: God had given them meat for their hunger in the manna, wholesome pleasant food, and in abundance, he had given them meat for their faith, out of the heads of Leviathan, which he broke in pieces, Psalm lxxiv. 14. But all this would not serve, they must have meat for their lust; dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God, than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh.

(2.) By distrustful his power to give them what they desired: This was tempting God indeed! They challenged him to give them flesh; and if he did not, they would say, it was because he could not, not because he did not see it fit for them, ver. 19. They spake against God. They that set bounds to God's power, speak against him: It was as injurious a reflection as could be cast upon God, to say, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? They had manna, but they did not think they had a table furnished, unless they had boiled and roast, a first, a second, and a third course, as they had in Egypt, where they had both flesh and fish, and fowls too, Exod. xvi. 3. Numb. xi. 5. Dishes of meat, and salvers of fruit: What an unreasonable, insatiable thing is luxury! Such a mighty thing did these epicures think a table well furnished to be, that they thought it was more than God himself could give them in that wilderness; whereas the beasts of the forest, and all the fowls of the mountains are his, Psalm l. 10, 11. Their disbelief of God's power was so much the worse, in that they did, at the same time own that he had done as much as that came to, ver. 20. Behold he smote the rock that the waters gushed out, which they and their cattle drank of. And whether it is easier, to furnish a table in the wilderness, which a rich man can do, or to fetch water out of a rock, which the greatest potentate on the earth cannot do? Never did unbelief, though always unreasonable, ask so absurd a question! Can he that melted down a rock into streams of water, give bread also? Or can he that has given bread, provide flesh also? Is any thing too hard for omnipotence? When once the ordinary powers of nature are exceeded, God has made bare his arm, and we must conclude, nothing is impossible with him. Be it never so great a thing that we ask, it becomes us to own, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.

3. God justly resented the provocation, and was much displeased with them, ver. 21. The Lord heard this, and was wroth. Note, God is a witness to all our murmurings and distrusts; he hears them, and is much displeased with them. A fire was kindled for this against Jacob, the fire of the Lord burnt among them, Numb. xi. 1. Or, it may be understood of the fire of God's anger which came up against Israel. To unbelievers our God is himself a consuming fire: and those that will not believe the power of God's mercy, shall feel the power of his indignation, and be made to confess, that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Now here we are told,

(1.) Why God thus resented the provocation, ver. 4. Because by this it appeared, that they believed not in God; they did not give credit to the revelation he had made of himself to them, for they durst not commit themselves to him, nor venture themselves with him; they trusted not in the salvation he had begun to work for them; for then they would not thus have questioned its progress. Those cannot be said to trust in God's salvation as their felicity at last, who cannot find in their hearts to trust in his providence for good convenient in the way to it. And that which aggravated their unbelief, was the experience they had had of the power and goodness of God, ver. 23, 24, 25. He had given them undeniable proofs of his power, not only on earth beneath, but in heaven above; for he commanded the clouds from above, as one that had created them, and commanded them into being; he made what use he pleased of them. Ordinarily by their showers they contribute to the earth's producing corn; but now, when God so commanded them, they showered down corn themselves, which is therefore called here the corn of heaven? for heaven can do the work without the earth, but not the earth without heaven. God who has the key of the clouds, opened the doors of heaven, that is more than opening the windows, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, Mal. iii. 10. To all that by faith and prayer, ask, seek, and knock, these doors shall at any time be opened, for the God of heaven is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; he not only keeps a good house, but keeps open house. Justly might God take it ill they should distrust him, when he had been so very kind to them, that he had rained down manna upon them to eat, substantial food daily, duly enough for all, enough for each, man did eat angels food, such as angels, if they had occasion for food; would eat and be thankful; or rather such as was given by the ministry of angels, and (as the Chaldee reads it) descended from the dwelling of angels. Every one, even the least child in Israel, did eat the bread



bread of the mighty; (so the margin reads it) the weakest stomach could digest it, and yet it was so nourishing, that it was strong meat for strong men. And though the provision was so good, yet they were not stinted, nor even reduced to short allowance: for he sent them meat to the full, if they gathered little, it was their own fault; and yet even then they had no lack. *Exod. xvi. 18.* The daily provision God makes for us, and has made ever since we came into the world, though it has not so much of miracle as this, has no less of merriness, and is therefore a great aggravation of our distrust of God.

(2.) How he expressed his resentment of the provocation, not in denying them what they so inordinately lusted after, but in granting it to them. (1.) Did they question his power, he soon gave them a sensible conviction that he could furnish a table in the wilderness. Though the winds seem to blow when they list, yet when he pleased he could make them his caterers to fetch in provisions. *ver. 26.* He caused an east wind to blow, and a south wind, either a south-east wind, or an east wind, first to bring in the quails from that quarter; and then a south wind to bring in more from that quarter; so that he rained flesh upon them, and that of the most elegant sort, not butcher's meat but wild fowl, and abundance of it, *as dust, as the sand of the sea, ver. 27.* So that the meanest Israelite might have his belly full of it, and it cost them nothing, no not the pains of fetching it from the mountains, for *He let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitation, ver. 28.* we have the story, *Numb. xi. 31, 32.* See how good God is, even to the evil and unthankful, and wonder that his goodness doth not overcome their badness. See what little reason we have to judge of God's love by such gifts of his bounty as these; dainty bits are no tokens of his peculiar favour: Christ gave dry bread to the disciples he loved, but a sop dipped in the sauce to Judas that betrayed him. (2.) Did they defy his justice, and boast that they had gained their point; he made them pay dear for their quails, for though he gave them *their own desire, they were not estranged from their lusts, ver. 29, 30.* i. e. their appetite was insatiable, they were well filled, and yet they were not satisfied: for they knew not what they would have; such is the nature of lust, it is content with nothing, and the more it is humoured, the more humourous it grows: They that indulge their lusts, will never be estranged from it. Or it intimates, that God's liberality did not make them ashamed of their ungrateful lustings, as it would have done, if they had any sense of honour. But what came of it? While the meat was yet in their mouth, rolled under their tongue as a sweet morsel, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, *ver. 31.* those that were most luxurious and most daring. See *Numb. xi. 33, 34.* They were led as sheep for the slaughter: the butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites that eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists, here read their doom; they who make a god of their belly, their end is destruction, *Phil. iii. 19.* The prosperity of fools shall destroy them, and their ruin will be the greater.

4. The judgments of God upon them did not reform them, nor attain the end, no more than his mercies, *ver. 32.* For all this they sinned still, they murmured and quarrelled with God and Moses as much as ever. Though God wroth and smote them, yet they went on forwardly in the way of their heart, *Isa. lvi. 17.* they believed not for his wondrous works. Though his works of justice were as wonders and as great proofs of his power as his works of mercy, yet they were not wrought upon by them to fear God, nor convinced how much it was their interest to make him their friend. These hearts are hard indeed, that will neither be melted by the mercies of God, nor broken by his judgments.

5. They persisting in their sins, God proceeded in his judgments, but they were judgments of another nature, which wrought not suddenly but slowly. He punished them not with such acute diseases, as that was which slew the fattest of them, but a lingering chronicall distemper, *ver. 33.* Therefore their days did he consume in vanity in the wilderness, and their years in trouble. By an irreversibile doom they were condemned to wear out thirty-eight tedious years in the wilderness, which indeed were consumed in vanity! for in all those years there was not a step taken near Canaan but they were turned back again, and wandered to and fro as in a labyrinth, nor one stroke struck towards the conquest of it; and not only in vanity, but in trouble, for their carcasses were condemned to fall in the wilderness, and there they all perished but Caleb and Joshua. Note, Those that sit still, must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we spend our days in so much vanity and trouble, why we live with so little comfort, and to so little purpose, is, because we do not live by faith.

6. Under these rebukes they professed repentance, but they were not cordial and sincere in it. (1.) Their profession was plausible enough, *ver. 34, 35.* When he slew them, or condemned them to be slain, then they sought him; they confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. When some were slain, others in a fright cried to God for mercy, and promised they would reform and be very good, then they returned to God and enquired early after him; So one would take them to be such as desired to find him. And they pretended to do this, because, however, they had forgotten it formerly, now they remembered that God was their rock, and therefore now they needed him, they would fly to him and take shelter in him; and that the high God was their Redeemer, that brought them out of Egypt, and to whom therefore they might come with boldness. Afflictions are sent to put us in mind of God as our rock and our Redeemer: for in prosperity we are apt to forget him. (2.) They were not sincere in his profession, *ver. 36, 37.* They did but flatter him with their mouth, as if they thought by fair speeches to prevail with him to revoke the sentence and remove the judgment, with a secret intention to break their word when the danger was over; they did not return to God with their whole heart, but feigningly; *Jer. iii. 10.* All their professions, prayers, and promises, were retorted by the rack; it is plain they did not mean as they said; for they did not stick to it, they thawed in the sun but froze in the shade; they did but lye to God with their tongues, for their heart was not with him, was not right with him, as appeared by the issue, for they were not steadfast in his covenant. They were not sincere in their reformation, for they were not constant: and by thinking thus to impose upon a heart-searching God, they really put as great an affront by him as by any of their reflections.

7. God hereupon in pity to them put a stop to the judgments which were threatened and in part executed, *ver. 38, 39.* But he being full of compassion forgave their iniquity. One would think this counterfeit repentance should have filled up the measure of their iniquity. What could be more provoking than to lye thus to the holy God? than thus to keep back part of the price? the chief part? *Acts v. 3.* And yet he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity thus far, that he did not destroy them and cut them off from being a people, as justly he might have done, but spared their lives till they had reared another generation which should enter into the promised land. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, *Isa. lxxviii. 8.* Many a time he turned his anger away: for he is Lord of his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath, to deal with them as they deserved; and why did he not? Not because their ruin would have been any loss to him, but (1.) Because he was

full of compassion, and when he was going to destroy them, his repentings were kindled together, and he said, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?* *Hos. xi. 8.* (2.) Because though they did not rightly remember that he was their rock, he remembered that they were but flesh. He considered the corruption of their nature which inclined them to evil, and was pleased to make that an excuse for his sparing them, though it was really no excuse for their sin. See *Gen. vi. 3.* He considered the weakness and frailty of their nature, and what an easy thing it would be to crush them, they are as wind that passeth away and cometh not again. They may soon be taken off, but when they are gone, they are gone irrecoverably, and then what will become of the covenant with Abraham? They are flesh, they are wind; from whence it were easy to argue, they may justly, they may presently be cut off, and there would be no loss of them; but God argues on the contrary, therefore he will not destroy them, for the true reason is, *He is full of compassion.*

40. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert? 41. Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the holy one of Israel. 42. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. 43. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan: 44. And had turned their rivers into blood, and their floods, that they could not drink. 45. He sent divers sorts of flies among them which devoured them; and frogs which destroyed them. 46. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. 48. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. 49. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. 50. He made a way to his anger, he spared not their soul from death; but gave their life over to the pestilence. 51. And smote all the first-born in Egypt: the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52. But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. 53. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not; but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. 54. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain which his right hand had purchased. 55. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents? 56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies. 57. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. 58. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. 59. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: 60. So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men: 61. And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hand. 62. He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance. 63. The fire consumed their young men: and their maidens were not given to marriage. 64. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation. 65. Then the LORD awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. 66. And he smote his enemies in the hinder part; he put them to a perpetual reproach. 67. Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph; and chose not the tribe of Ephraim. 68. But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. 69. And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever. 70. He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-fold: 71. From following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. 72. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart: and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

The matter and scope of this paragraph is the same with the former, shewing what great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, how provoking they had been, what judgments he had brought upon them for their sins, and yet how in judgment he remembered mercy at last. Let not those that receive mercies from God be thereby emboldened to sin, for the mercies they receive will aggravate their sin, and hasten the punishment of it; yet let not those that are under divine rebukes for sin, be discouraged from repentance, for their punishments are means of repentance, and shall not prevent the mercy God has yet in store for them. Observe,

1. The sins of Israel in the wilderness again reflected on, because written for our admonition, *ver. 40, 41.* How often did they provoke him in the wilderness? Not once, or twice, but many a time; and the repetition of the provocation was a great aggravation of it, as well as the place, *ver. 17.* God kept an account how often they provoked him, though they did not, *Numb. xiv. 22.* They have tempted me these ten times. By provoking him they did not so much anger him as grieve him; for he looked upon them as his children, *Israel is my Son, my first-born;* and the undutiful, disrespectful carriage of children, doth more grieve than anger the tender parents; they lay it to heart, and take it unkindly, *Isa. i. 2.* They grieved him, because



because they put him under a necessity of afflicting them; which he did not willingly. After they had humbled themselves before him, they turned back and tempted God, as before, and limited the holy One of Israel, prescribing to him what proofs he should give of his power and presence with them, and what methods he should take in leading them, and providing for them. They limited him to their way and their time, as if he did not observe that they quarrelled with him. It is presumption for us to limit the holy One of Israel; for being the holy One, he will do what is most for his own glory; and being the holy One of Israel, he will do what is most for their good; and we both impeach his wisdom, and betray our own pride and folly, if we go about to prescribe to him. That which occasioned their limiting God for the future, was their forgetting his former favours, ver. 42. They remembered not his hand, how strong it is, and how it had been stretched out for them, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. Pharaoh that great enemy that fought their ruin. There are some days made remarkable by signal deliverances, which ought never to be forgotten; for the remembrance of them would encourage us in our greatest straits.

2. The mercies of God to Israel which they were unmindful of when they tempted God, and limited him, and this catalogue of the works of wonder which God wrought for them, begins hither, and is carried down further than that before, ver. 12, &c.

(1.) This begins with their deliverance out of Egypt, and the plagues with which God compelled the Egyptians to let them go; these were the signs God wrought in Egypt, ver. 43. the wonders he wrought in the field of Zoan, i. e. in the country of Zoan, as we say, in *Agro N.* meaning in such a country.

Divers of the plagues of Egypt are here instanced in, which speak aloud the power of God, his favour to Israel, as well as terror to his and their enemies. As, (1.) The turning of the waters into blood; they had made themselves drunk with the blood of God's people, even the infants, and now God gave them blood to drink, for they were worthy, ver. 44. (2.) The flies and frogs which infested them, mixtures of insects in swarms, in shoals which devoured them, which destroyed them, ver. 45. For God can make the weakest and most despicable animals instruments of his wrath, when he pleaseth; what they want in strength may be made up in number. (3.) The plague of locusts, which devoured their increase, and that which they had laboured for, ver. 46. They are called God's great army, Joel ii. 25. (4.) The hail, which destroyed their trees, especially their vines, the weakest of trees, ver. 47. and their cattle, especially their flocks of sheep, the weakest of their cattle, which were killed with hot thunderbolts, ver. 48. And the frost, or congealed rain (as the word signifies) was so violent, that it destroyed even the sycamore trees. (5.) The death of the first-born was the last and forest of the plagues of Egypt, and that which perfected the deliverance of Israel; it was first in intention, Exod. iv. 23. but last in execution; for, if gentler methods would have done the work this had been prevented; but it is here largely described, ver. 49, 50, 51. (1.) The anger of God was the cause of it; wrath was now come upon the Egyptians to the uttermost; Pharaoh's heart having been often hardened after lesser judgments had softened it; God now stirred up all his wrath; for he cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, anger in the highest degree; wrath and indignation the cause, and trouble (tribulation and anguish, Rom. ii. 8, 9.) the effect. This from on high he cast upon them, and did not spare and they could not flee out of his hand, Job xxvii. 22. He made a way; or, as the word is, He weighed a path to his anger; he did not cast it upon them uncertainly, but by weight; his anger was weighed with the greatest exactness in the balances of justice; for in his greatest displeasure he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures; the path of his anger is always weighed. (2.) The angels of God were the instruments employed in this execution; he sent evil angels among them; not evil in their own nature, but in respect to the errand upon which they were sent; they were destroying angels, or angels of punishment, which passed through all the land of Egypt, with orders according to the weighed paths of God's anger, not to kill all, but the first-born only. Good angels become evil angels to sinners; they that make the holy God their enemy, let them never expect the holy angels to be their friends. (3.) The execution itself was very severe. He spared not their soul from death, but suffered death to ride in triumph among them, and gave their life over to the pestilence, which cut the thread of life off immediately; for he smote all the first-born in Egypt, ver. 51. the chief of their strength, the hopes of their respective families; children are the parents strength, and the first-born the chief of their strength. Thus, because Israel was precious in God's sight, he gave men for them, and people for their life, Isa. xliii. 4.

By these plagues on the Egyptians, God made a way for his own people to go forth like sheep: distinguishing between them and the Egyptians, as the shepherd divideth between the sheep and the goats, having set his own mark on these sheep, by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their door posts. He made them go forth like sheep, not knowing whither they went, and guided them in the wilderness, like as a shepherd guides his flock, with all possible care and tenderness, ver. 52. He led them on safely, though in dangerous paths, so that they feared not, i. e. they did not need to fear; they were indeed frightened at the Red-sea, Exod. xiv. 10. But that was said to them, and done for them, which effectually silenced their fears. But the sea overwhelmed their enemies that ventured to pursue them in it, ver. 53. It was a lane to them, but a grave to their persecutors.

(2.) It is carried down as far as their settlement in Canaan, ver. 54. He brought them to the borders of his sanctuary, i. e. to that land, in the midst of which he set up his sanctuary, which was as it were the centre and metropolis, the crown and glory of it; that it is a happy land which is the border of God's sanctuary; it was the happiness of that land, that there God was known, and there was his sanctuary and dwelling-place, Psalm lxxvi. 1, 2. The whole land in general, and Zion in particular, was the mountain which his right hand had purchased, which by his own power he had set apart for himself. See Psalm xlv. 3. He made them to ride on the high places of the earth, Isa. lviii. 14. Deut. xxxii. 13. They found the Canaanites in the full and quiet possession of the land, but God cast out the heathen before them, not only took away their title to it, as the Lord of the whole earth, but himself executed the judgment given against them, and as the Lord of hosts turned them out of it, and made his people Israel tread upon their high places, dividing each tribe an inheritance by line, and making them to dwell in the houses of those whom they had destroyed. God could have turned the uninhabited, uncultivated wilderness (which perhaps was almost as much compass of ground as Canaan) into fruitful soil, and have planted them there; but the land he designed them was to be a type of heaven, and therefore must be the glory of all lands: it must likewise be fought for, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

3. The sins of Israel after they were settled in Canaan, ver. 56, 57, 58. The children were like their fathers, and brought their old corruptions into their new habitations; though God had done so much for them, yet they tempted and provoked the most high God still. He gave them his testimonies, but they did not keep them: they began very promisingly, but they turned back, gave God good words, but dealt unfaithfully, and were like a de-

ceitful bow, which seemed likely to send the arrow to the mark, but when it is drawn breaks, and drops the arrow at the archer's foot; or perhaps makes it recoil in his face. There was no hold of them, nor any confidence to be put in their promises or professions. They seemed sometimes devoted to God, but they presently turned aside, and provoked him to anger with their high places, and their graven images. Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset them, and which, though they often professed their repentance for, they as often relapsed into. It was spiritual adultery either to worship idols, or to worship God by images, as if he had been an idol, and therefore by it they are said to move him to jealousy, Deut. xxxii. 16—21.

4. The judgments God brought upon them for these sins. Their place in Canaan would no more secure them in a sinful way, than their descent from Israel. You only, have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you, Amos iii. 2. Idolatry is winked at among the Gentiles, but not in Israel. (1.) God was displeased with them, ver. 59. When God heard this, when he heard the cry of their iniquity, which came up before him, he was wrath, he took it very heinously, as well he might, and he greatly abhorred Israel, whom he had greatly loved and delighted in. They that had been the people of his choice, became the generation of his wrath. Presumptuous sins, idolatries especially, render even Israelites odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice. (2.) He deserted his tabernacle among them, and removed the defence which was upon that glory, ver. 60. God never leaves us, till we leave him, never withdraws till we have driven him from us. His name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God, and therefore no marvel if a people whom he had betrothed to himself, he loathed and rejected, and he refuseth to cohabit with them any longer, when they have embraced the bosom of a stranger. The tabernacle at Shiloh was the tent God had placed among men, in which God would in very deed dwell with men upon the earth; but when his people treacherously forsook it, he justly forsook it, and then all its glory departed. Israel has small joy of the tabernacle without the presence of God in it. (3.) He gave up all into the hands of the enemy. Those whom God forsakes become an easy prey to the destroyer. The Philistines are sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and no less so to the God of Israel, and yet God will make use of them to be a scourge to his people: (1.) God permits them to take the ark prisoner, and carry it off as a trophy of their victory, to show that he had not only forsaken the tabernacle, but even the ark itself, which shall now be no longer a token of his presence, ver. 6. He delivered his strength into captivity, as if it had been weakened and overcome, and his glory fell under the disgrace of being abandoned into the enemies hands. We have the story, 1 Sam. iv. 11. When the ark is become as a stranger among Israelites, no marvel if it soon be made a prisoner among Philistines. (2.) He suffers the armies of Israel to be routed by the Philistines, ver. 62, 63. He gave his people over unto the sword, to the sword of his own justice, and of the enemies rage, for he was wrath for his inheritance; and that wrath of his was the fire which consumed their young men, in the prime of their time, by the sword of sickness, and made such devastation of them, that their maidens were not praised, i. e. were not given in marriage, which is honourable in all, because there was no young men for them to be given to; and because the distresses and calamities of Israel were so many and great, that the joys of marriage solemnities were judged unreasonable; and it was said, Blessed is the womb that beareth not. General destructions produce a scarcity of men, Job xlii. 12. I will make a man more precious than fine gold, so that seven women shall take hold of one man, Isa. lv. 1. Compare iii. 25. Yet this was not the worst, (1.) Even their priests that attended the ark fell by the sword, Hophni and Phinehas; justly they fell, for they made themselves vile, and were sinners, before the Lord exceedingly; and their priesthood was so far from being their protection, that it aggravated their sin, and hastened their fall; And justly did they fall by the sword, because they exposed themselves in the field of battle, without call or warrant; and we throw ourselves out of God's protection, when we go out of our place, and out of the way of our duty. When the priests fell, their widows made no lamentations, ver. 74. All the ceremonies of mourning were lost and buried in substantial grief; the widow of Phinehas, instead of lamenting her husband's death, died herself, when she had called her son Ichabod, 1 Sam. iv. 19.

5. God's return in mercy to them, and his gracious appearances for them after this. We read not of their inheritance and return to God, but God was grieved for the miseries of Israel, Judg. x. 16. And concerned for his own honour, fearing the wrath of the enemy, lest they should behave themselves strangely, Deut. xxxii. 27. And therefore then the Lord awoke as one out of sleep, (ver. 65.) and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, not only like one that is raised out of sleep, and recovers himself from the slumber, which by drinking he was overcome with, who then regarded that which before he seemed wholly to neglect, and to be mindless of; but like one that is refreshed with sleep, and whose heart is made glad by the sober and moderate use of wine, and is therefore the more lively and vigorous, and fit for business. When God had delivered the ark of his strength into captivity, as one jealous of his honour, he soon put forth the arm of his strength to rescue it; stirred up his strength to do great things for his people.

1. He plagued the Philistines that held the ark in captivity, ver. 66. He smote them with emerods in the hinder parts, wounded them behind, as if they were fleeing from him, even then when they thought themselves more than conquerors. He put them to reproach, and they themselves helped to make it a perpetual reproach by the golden images of their emerods, which they returned with the ark for a trespass offering, 1 Sam. vi. 5. to remain perpetuum rei memoriam. Note, Sooner or later God will glorify himself by putting disgrace upon his enemies, then when they are most elevated with their successes.

2. He provided a new settlement for his ark, after it had been some months in captivity, and some years in obscurity. He did indeed refuse the tabernacle of Joseph, he never sent it back to Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, ver. 67. The ruins of that place were standing monuments of divine justice, Go, see what I did to Shiloh, Jos. vii. 12. But he did not wholly take away the glory from Israel; the moving of the ark is not the removing of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not: God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Zion, as long after the fall of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles, Rom. xi. 12. When God chose not the tribe of Ephraim, of which tribe Joshua was; but he chose the tribe of Judah, ver. 68. because of that tribe Jesus was to be, who is greater than Joshua. Kirjath-jearim, the place to which the ark was brought after its rescue out of the hands of the Philistines, was in the tribe of Judah; there it took possession of that tribe; but thence it was removed to Zion, that mount Zion which he loved, ver. 61. which was beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, there it was that he built his sanctuary like high palaces, and like the earth. David indeed erected only a tent for the ark, but a temple was then designed and prepared for, and finished by his son. And that was, (1.) A very stately place. It was built like the palaces of princes, and the great men of the earth, nay, it excelled them all in splendor and magnificence; Solomon built it, and yet here it is said God built it, for his Father had taught him, perhaps, with reference to this undertaking, that except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that



*build it*, Pfalm cxxvii. 1. which is a psalm for Solomon. (2.) A very stable place, like the earth; though not to continue as long as the earth, yet while it was to continue, it was as firm as the earth, which God *upholds by the word of his power*, and it was not finally destroyed till the gospel-temple was erected, which is to continue as long as the sun and moon endure, *Pfalm lxxxix. 36, 37.* and against which the *gates of hell shall not prevail*.

3. He set a good government over them; a monarchy, and a monarch after his own heart. *He chose David his servant* out of all the thousands of Israel, and put the sceptre into his hand, out of whose loins Christ was to come, and who was to be a type of him, *ver. 70.* Concerning David, observe here,

1. The meanness of his beginning. His extraction indeed was great, for he descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, but his education was poor; he was bred not a scholar, not a soldier, but a shepherd, he was *taken from the sheep-fold*, as Moses was, for God delights to put honour upon the humble and diligent, to raise the poor out of the dust, and to set them among the princes; and sometimes finds those most fit for public action that have spent the beginning of their time in solitude and contemplation. The son of David was upbraided with the obscurity of his original, *Is not this the carpenter?* David was taken, he doth not say, from leading the rams, but from following the ewes, especially those great with young, which intimated that of all the good properties of a shepherd he was most remarkable for his tenderness and compassion to those of his flock that most needed it; this temper of mind fitted him for government, and made him a type of Christ, who, when he feeds his flock like a shepherd, doth with a particular care gently lead those that are with young, *Isa. xl. 11.*

2. The greatness of his advancement. God preserved him to feed Jacob his people, *ver. 71.* It was a great honour God put upon him in advancing him to be a king, especially to be king over Jacob and Israel, God's peculiar people, near and dear to him; but withal it was a great trust reposed in him when he was charged with the conduct of those that were God's own inheritance. God advanced him to the throne that he might feed them, not that he might feed himself; that he might do good, not that he might make his family great. It is the charge given to all the under-shepherds, both magistrates and ministers, that they *feed the flock of God*.

3. The happiness of his management. David having so great a trust put into his hands, obtained mercy of the Lord to be found both skilful and faithful in the discharge of it, *ver. 72.* So he fed them, he ruled them and taught them, guided and protected them, (1.) Very honestly: he did it according to the integrity of his heart, aiming at nothing else but the glory of God, and the good of the people committed to his charge; the principles of his religion were the maxims of his government, which he administered, not with carnal policy, but with *godly sincerity, by the grace of God*. In every thing he did, he meant well, and had no by-end in view. (2.) Very discreetly. He did it by the skilfulness of his hands; he was not only very sincere in what he designed but very prudent in what he did, and chose out the most proper means in pursuit of his end, for his God did instruct him to discretion. Happy the people that are under such a government! And with good reason doth the psalmist make this the finishing, crowning instance of God's favour to Israel, for David was a type of Christ the great and good shepherd, who was humbled first, and then exalted, and of whom it was foretold, that he should be filled with the *spirit of wisdom and understanding*, and should *judge and improve with equity*, *Isa. xi. 3, 4.* On the integrity of his heart and the skilfulness of his hands all his subjects may intirely rely, and of the increase of his government and people there shall be no end.

P S A L M LXXIX.

This psalm, if penned with any particular event in view, is with most probability made to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the woeful harock made of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. It is set to the same tune, as I may say, with the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and that weeping prophet borrows two verses out of it, *ver. 6, 7.* and makes use of them in his prayer, *Jer. x. 25.* Some think it was penned long before by the spirit of prophecy, prepared for the use of the church in that cloudy and dark day: Others, that it was penned then by the spirit of prayer, either by a prophet named Asaph or some other prophet for the sons of Asaph. Whatever the particular occasion was, we have here, (1.) A representation of the very deplorable condition that the people of God were in at this time, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) A petition to God for succour and relief; that their enemies might be reckoned with, *ver. 6, 7—10—12.* that their sins might be pardoned, *ver. 8, 9.* and that they might be delivered, *ver. 11.* (3.) A plea taken from the readiness of his people to praise him, *ver. 13.* In times of the church's peace and prosperity, this psalm may in the singing of it give us occasion to bless God that we are not thus trampled on and insulted: But it is especially seasonable in a day of treading down and perplexity, for the exciting of our desires towards God, and the encouragement of our faith in him as the church's patron.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. **O** GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled: they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. 2. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. 3. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem: and there was none to bury them. 4. We are become a reproach to our neighbours: a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. 5. How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

We have here a sad complaint exhibited in the court of heaven; The world is full of complaints, and so is the church too, for it not only suffers with it, but from it; as a lily among thorns, God, is complained to; whither should children go with their grievances, but to their father, to such a father as is able and willing to help: The heathen are complained of, who being themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were sworn enemies to it. Though they know not God, nor owned him, yet God having them in a chain the church very fitly appeals to him against them, for he is King of nations to overrule them, to judge among the heathen, and the King of saints to favour and protect them.

1. They complain here of the anger of their enemies, and the outrageous fury of the oppressor, exerted,

(1.) Against places, *ver. 1.* They did all the mischief they could, (1.) To the holy land: they invaded that, and made inroads into it; The heathen are come into thine inheritance, to plunder that and lay it waste, Canaan was dearer to the pious Israelites, as it was God's inheritance; that as it was their own; as it was the land in which God was known, and his name was great, than as it was the land in which they were bred and born, and which they and their ancestors had been long in possession of. Note, Injuries done to religion should grieve us more than even those done to common right; nay, to our own right. We should better bear to see our own inheritance wasted than God's inheritance. This psalmist had mentioned it in the foregoing psalm as an instance of God's great favour to Israel, that he had cast out the heathen before them, *Pfalm lxxviii. 55.* But see what a change sin made, now the heathen are suffered to pour in upon them. (2.) To the holy city; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps, heaps of rubbish, such heaps as are raised over graves (so some). The inhabitants were buried in the ruins of their own houses, and their dwelling-places became their sepulchres, their long homes. (3.) To the holy house; that sanctuary which God had built like high palaces, and which was thought to be established as the earth, was now laid level with the ground; thy holy temple have they defiled, by entering into it and laying it waste. God's own people had defiled it, by their sins, and therefore God suffered their enemies to defile it by their insolence.

(2.) Against persons, against the bodies of God's people, and further their malice could not reach. (1.) They were prodigal of their blood, and killed them without mercy; their eye did not spare, nor did they give any quarter, *ver. 3.* Their blood have they shed like water, wherever they met with them, round about Jerusalem, in all the avenues to the city whoever went out or come in, was waited for of the sword. Abundance of human blood was shed, so that the channels of water ran with blood; And they did it with no more reluctance or regret, than if they had spilt so much water, little thinking that every drop of it will be reckoned for in the day when God shall make inquisition for blood. (2.) They were abusive to their dead bodies; when they had killed them, they would let none bury them. Nay, those that were buried, even the dead bodies of God's servants, the flesh of his saints, whose names and memories they had a particular spite at, they digged up again, and gave them to be meat to the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth, or at least, they left those so exposed whom they slew they hung them in chains, which was in a particular manner grievous to the Jews to see, because God had given them an express law against this, as a barbarous thing, *Deut. xxi. 23.* This inhuman usage of Christ's witnesses is foretold, *Rev. xi. 9.* and thus even the dead bodies were witnesses against their persecutors. This is mentioned (saith Austin *de civitate Dei, lib. 1. cap. xii.*) not as an instance of the misery of the persecuted, for the bodies of the saints shall rise in glory, however they became meat to the birds and the fowls, but of the malice of the persecutors.

(3.) Against their names, *ver. 4.* We that survive are become a reproach to our neighbours, they all study to abuse us, and load us with contempt, and represent us as ridiculous or odious, or both: upbraiding us with our sins and with our sufferings, or giving the lie to our relation to God, and expectations from him; so that we are become a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were counted as the off-scouring of all things.

2. They wonder more at God's anger, *ver. 5.* This they discern in the anger of their neighbours, and this they complain most of, *How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry?* Shall it be for ever? This intimates, that they desired no more but that God would be reconciled to them, that his anger might be turned away, and then the remainder of men's wrath would be restrained. Note, Those who desire God's favour as better than life, cannot but dread and deprecate his wrath as worse than death.

6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. 7. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place. 8. O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low. 9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins for thy name's sake. 10. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our fight, by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed. 11. Let the fighting of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die. 12. And render unto our neighbours seven-fold into their bosom, the reproach wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord. 13. So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

The petitions here put up to God are very suitable to the present distresses of the church, and they have pleas to enforce them, interwoven with them, taken mostly from God's honour.

1. They pray that God would so turn away his anger from them, as to turn it upon those that persecuted and abused them, *ver. 6.* Pour out thy wrath, the full vials of it, upon the heathen; let them wring out the dregs of it and drink them. This prayer is in effect a prophecy, in which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Observe here, (1.) The character of those he prays against: they are such as have not known God, nor called upon his name. And the reason why men do not call upon God is, because they do not know him, how able and willing he is to help them. They that persist in ignorance of God, and neglect of prayer, are the ungodly, who live without God in the world. There are kingdoms that know not God, and obey not the gospel, but neither their multitude, nor their force united, will secure them from his just judgments. (2.) Their crime; they have devoured Jacob, *ver. 7.* And that is crime enough in the account of him, who reckons those that touch his people, touch the apple of his eye. They have not only disturbed but devoured Jacob: not only encroached upon his dwelling-place, the land of Canaan, but have laid it waste by plundering and depopulating it. (3.) Their condemnation. Pour out thy wrath upon



upon them; do not only restrain them from doing further mischief, but reckon with them for the mischief they have done.

2. They pray for the pardon of sin, which they own to be the procuring cause of all their calamities. How unrighteous soever men were, God was righteous in permitting them to do what they did. They pray,

(1.) That God would not remember against them their former iniquities, ver. 8. Either their own former iniquities, that now they were old they might not be made to possess the iniquities of their youth. Or the former iniquities of their people, the sins of their ancestors: In the captivity of Babylon former iniquities were brought to account; but God promiseth not again to do so, *Jer. xxxi. 29, 30.* and so they pray, remember not against us our first sins; which some make to look as far back as the golden calf, because that God said, *In the day when I visit, I will visit for this sin of theirs upon them, Exod. xxxii. 34.* If the children by repentance and reformation cut off the entail of the parent's sin, they may in faith pray that God will not remember them against them. When God pardons sin, he blots it out, and remembers it no more.

(2.) That he would purge away their sins they had been lately guilty of, by the guilt of which their minds and consciences had been defiled. *Deliver us, and purge away our sins, ver. 9.* Then deliverance from trouble are granted in love, and are mercies indeed when they are grounded upon the pardon of sin, and flow from that; we should therefore be more earnest with God in prayer for the removal of our sins, than for the removal of our afflictions, and the pardon of them is the foundation and sweetness of our deliverances.

3. They pray, that God would work deliverance and salvation for them, and bring their troubles to a good end, and that speedily; *Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, ver. 8.* They had no hopes but from God's mercies, his tender mercies; their case was so deplorable that they looked upon themselves as the proper objects of divine compassion; and so near, so desperate, that unless divine mercy did speedily interpose to prevent their ruin, they were undone. This whets their importunity, *Lord, help us; Lord, deliver us; help us under our troubles, that we bear them well; help us out of our trouble that the spirit may not fail. Deliver us from sin, from sinking; three things they plead, (1.) The great distress they were reduced to: We are brought very low; and being low, shall be lost, if thou help us not. The lower we are brought the more need we have of help from heaven, and the more will divine power be magnified in raising us up. (2.) Their dependence upon him: Thou art the God of our salvation who alone canst help, salvation belongeth to the Lord, and whom we expect help from; for in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people. They who make God the God of their salvation shall find him so. (3.) The interest of his own honour in their case; they plead no merit of theirs, they pretend to none, but help us for the glory of thy name; pardon us for thy name's sake. The best encouragements in prayer, are those that are taken from God only, and those things whereby he had made himself known. Two things are insinuated in this plea. (1.) That God's name and honour would be greatly injured if he did not deliver them; for those that derided them blasphemed God, as if he were weak and could not help them, or withdrawn and would not; therefore they plead, ver. 10. *Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?* he has forsaken them and forgotten them; and this they get by worshipping a God whom they cannot see. (*Nil præter nubes, & cæli numen adorant, Juv.*) That which was their praise that they served a God that is every where, was now turned to their reproach and his too, that they served a God that is no where. Lord, say they, make it to appear that thou art, by making it to appear that thou art with us, and for us; that when we are asked, *Where is our God?* we may be able to say, he is nigh unto us in all that which we call upon him for, and you see he is so by what he doth for us. (2.) That God's name and honour would be greatly advanced, if he did deliver them! his mercy would be glorified in delivering them that were so miserable and helpless. By making bare his everlasting arm on their behalf, he would make unto his self an everlasting name; and their deliverance would be a type and figure of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time Messiah the prince would work out to the glory of God's name.*

4. They pray, that God would avenge them on their adversaries, (1.) For their cruelty and barbarity, ver. 10. Let the avenging of our blood (according to the ancient law, *Gen. vi. 6.*) be known among the heathen, let them be made sensible that what judgments are brought upon them, are punishments of the wrong they have done to us, and let this be in our sight; and by this means let God be known among the heathen, as the God to whom vengeance belongs, Psalm xciv. 1. and the God that espouseth his people's cause. Those that have intoxicated themselves with the blood of the saints, shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. (2.) For their insolence and scorn, ver. 12. *Render to them their reproach.* The indignities which by word and deed they have done to the people of God himself and his name, let them be repaid to them with interest; the reproach wherewith men have reproached us only, we must have it to God whether he will render it to them or no, and must pray that he would forgive them; but the reproach wherewith they have blasphemed God himself, we may in faith pray, that God would render it seven-fold into their bosoms, so as to strike at their hearts, to humble them and bring them to repentance. This prayer is a prophecy of the same import with that of Enoch, that God will convince sinners of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, *Jude 15.* and will return them into their own bosoms by everlasting terrors at the remembrance of them.

5. They pray that God would find out a way for the rescue of his poor prisoners, especially the condemned prisoners, ver. 11. The cause of their brethren that were fallen into the hands of the enemy, was very sad; they were kept close prisoners, and because they durst not be heard to bemoan themselves, they vented their griefs in deep and silent sighs. All their breathing was sighing, and so was their praying: They were appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, and had received the sentence of death within themselves. This deplorable case the psalmist recommends, (1.) To the divine pity; *Let their sighs come up before thee,* and be thou pleased to take cognizance of their moans: (2.) To the divine power; *according to the greatness of thy arm,* which no creature can contest with, *preferre thou those that are appointed to die,* from the death to which they are appointed. Man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for his people. See 2, Cor. i. 8, 9, 10.

Lastly, They promise the returns of praise for the answer of prayer, ver. 13. *So we will give thee thanks for ever.* Observe, (1.) How they please themselves with their relation to God; though we are oppressed and brought low, yet we are the sheep of thy pasture, not disowned and cast off by thee for all this: *We are thine, save us.* (2.) How they promise themselves an opportunity of praising God for their deliverance; which they therefore desired, and would bid welcome, because it would furnish them with matter for thanksgiving, and put their hearts in tune for that excellent work, the work of heaven. (3.) How they oblige themselves not only to give God thanks at present, but to shew forth his praises unto all generations, i. e. to do all they could, both to perpetuate the remembrance of God's

favours to them, and engage their posterity to keep up the work of praise. (4.) How they plead this with God; Lord, appear for us against our enemies, for if they get the better, they will blaspheme thee, ver. 12. But if we be delivered we will praise thee. Lord, we are that people of thine which thou hast formed for thyself to shew forth thy praise; if we be cut off, whence shall that rent, that tribute be raised? Note, Those lives that are entirely devoted to God's praise, are assuredly taken under his protection.

P S A L M LXXX.

This psalm is much to the same purpose with the next foregoing: Some think it was penned upon occasion of the desolation and captivity of the ten tribes, as the foregoing psalm of the two. But many were the distresses of the Israel of God, many perhaps which are not recorded in the sacred history, some whereof might give occasion for the drawing up this psalm, which is proper to be sung in the day of Jacob's trouble, and if in singing of it we express a true love to the church, and a hearty concern for its interest, with a firm confidence in God's power to help it out of its greatest distresses, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord. The psalmist here, (1.) Begs for the tokens of God's presence with them, and favour to them, ver. 1—3. (2.) He complains of the present rebukes they were under, ver. 4—7. (3.) He illustrates the present desolations of the church, by the comparison of a vine and a vineyard which had flourished but was now destroyed, ver. 8—16. (4.) He concludes with prayer to God for the preparing of mercy for them, and the preparing of them for mercy, ver. 17—19. This, as many psalms before and after, relates to the public interests of God's Israel, which ought to lie nearer to our hearts, than any secular interest of our own.

¶ To the chief Musician upon Shofhannim, Eduth.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

1. **G**IVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. 2. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us. 3. Turn us again, O God: and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. 4. O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? 5. Thou feedest them with the bread of tears: and givest them tears to drink in great measure. 6. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves. 7. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, applies himself to God by prayer, with reference to the present afflicted state of Israel.

1. He intreats God's favour for them, ver. 1, 2. that is all in all to the sanctuary when it is desolate, and is to be sought in the first place. Observe (1.) How he eyes God in his address; as the shepherd of Israel, whom he had called the *sheep of his pasture*, Psalm lxxix. 13. under whose conduct and care Israel was, as the sheep under the care and conduct of the shepherd. Christ is the great and good shepherd, to whom we may in faith commit the custody of his sheep that were given to him. He leads Joseph like a flock, to the best pastures, and out of the way of danger; if Joseph followed him not as obsequiously as the sheep do the shepherd, it is his own fault. He dwells between the cherubims, where he is ready to receive petitions, and to give directions; the mercy-seat was between the cherubims, and it is very comfortable in prayer to look up to God as sitting on a throne of grace, and that it is so to us is owing to the great propitiation, for the mercy-seat was the propitiatory. (2.) What he expects and desires from God. That he would give ear to the cry of their miseries, and of their prayers: that he would shine forth both in his own glory, and in favour and kindness to his people; that he would shew himself and smile on them; that he would stir up his strength; that he would excite it and exert it: It had seemed to slumber, Lord awaken it; his cause met with great opposition, and the enemies threatened to overpower it, Lord, put forth thy strength so much the more; and come for salvation to us; be to thy people a powerful help, and a present help. Lord, do this before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, i. e. in the sight of all the tribes in Israel, let them see it to their satisfaction: perhaps these three tribes are named, because they were the tribes which formed that Squadron of the camp of Israel that in their march through the wilderness followed next after the tabernacle; so that before them the ark of God's strength rose to scatter their enemies.

2. He complains of God's displeasure against them; God was angry, and he dreads that more than any thing, ver. 4. (1.) It was great anger; he apprehended that God was angry against the prayer of his people; not only that he was angry notwithstanding their prayers, by which they hoped to turn away his wrath from them; but he was angry with their prayers, though they were his own people that prayed: that God should be angry at the sins of his people: and at the prayers of his enemies, is not strange; but that he should be angry at the prayers of his people is strange indeed. He not only delayed to answer them, that he often doth in love, but he was displeased at them. If he be really angry at the prayers of his people, we may be sure it is because they ask amiss, James iv. 3. They pray, but they do not wrestle in prayer, their ends are not right, or there is some secret sin harboured and indulged in them; they do not lift up pure hands, or with wrath and doubting. But perhaps it is only in their own apprehension; he seems angry with their prayers when really he is not; for thus he will try their patience and perseverance in prayer; as Christ tried the woman of Canaan when he said, *it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.* (2.) It was anger that had continued a great while. *How long wilt thou be angry?* We have still continued praying, and yet are still under thy frowns.

Now the tokens of God's displeasure which they had been longer under were both their sorrow and shame. (1.) Their sorrow, ver. 5. *Thou feedest them with the bread of tears,* they eat their meat from day to day in tears, this is the vinegar in which they dip their morsel, Psalm xlii. 3. They had tears given them to drink, not now and then a taste of that bitter cup, but in great measure. Note, There are many that spend their time in sorrow, who yet shall spend their eternity in joy. (2.) It was their shame, ver. 7. God by frowning upon them made them a strife unto their neighbours, each



store which should expose them most; and such a cheap and easy prey were they made to them, that all the strife was who should have the stripping and plundering of them. Their enemies laughed among themselves to see the frights they were in, the straits they were reduced to, and the disappointments they met with. When God is displeased with his people, we must expect to see them in tears, and their enemies in triumph.

3. He prays earnestly for converting grace in order to their acceptance with God, and their salvation, *turn us again, O God, ver. 3. Turn us again, O God of hosts, ver. 7. and then cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.* It is the burden of the song, for we have it again, *ver. 10.* They are conscious to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty, and have turned aside into sinful ways, and that it was it that provoked God to hide his face from them, and to give them up into the hand of their enemies; and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end; Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then, no doubt, thou wouldst return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance. Observe, (1.) No salvation but from God's favour; *cause thy face to shine*, let us have thy love and the light of thy countenance, and then we shall be saved. (2.) No obtaining favour with God unless we be converted to him. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then he will cause his face to shine upon us. (3.) No conversion to God but by his own grace; we must frame our doings to turn to him, *Hos. v. 4.* and then pray earnestly for his grace, *turn thou me, and I shall be turned*, pleading that gracious promise, *Prov. i. 23. Turn you at my reproof, behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you.* The prayer here is for a national conversion; in this method we must pray for national mercies, that what is amiss may be amended, and then our grievances would be soon redressed. National holiness would secure national happiness.

8. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. 9. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. 10. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. 11. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. 12. Why hast thou then, broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way, do pluck her? 13. The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. 14. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine: 15. And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself, 16. It is burnt with fire: it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. 17. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, and upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. 18. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us and we will call upon thy name. 19. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.

The psalmist is here presenting his suit for the Israel of God, and pressing it home at the throne of grace, pleading with God for mercy and grace for them. The church is here represented as a vine, *ver. 8—14.* and a vineyard, *ver. 15.* The root of this vine is Christ, *Rom. xi. 28.* The branches are believers, *John xv. 5.* The church is like a vine, weak, and needing support; unfighly, and having an unpromising outside, but spreading and fruitful, and its fruit most excellent; the church is a choice and noble vine; we have reason to acknowledge the goodness of God, that he has planted such a vine in the wilderness of this world, and preserved it to this day. Now observe here,

1. How the vine of the Old Testament church was planted at first. It was brought out of Egypt with a high hand, the heathen were cast out of Canaan to make room for it; seven nations to make room for that one. Thou didst sweep before it, so some read, *ver. 9.* to make clear work, the nations were swept away as dirt with the besom of destruction. God having made room for it and placed it, he caused it to take deep root by a happy establishment of their government both in church and state; which was so firm, that though their neighbours about them often attempted it, they could not prevail to pluck it up.

2. How it spread and flourished, (1.) The land of Canaan itself was fully peopled. At first they were not so numerous as to replenish it, *Exod. xxiii. 29.* But in Solomon's time *Judah and Israel were as many as the sand of the sea*; the land was filled with them, and yet such a fruitful land that it was not over-stocked, *ver. 10.* The hills of Canaan were covered with their shadow, and the branches, though they extend themselves far like those of the vine, yet were not weak like them, but as strong as those of the goodly cedars; Israel not only had abundance of men, but those mighty men of valour. (2.) They extended their conquests and dominion to the neighbouring countries, *ver. 11.* She sent out her boughs to the sea, the great sea westward, and her branches to the river, to the river of Egypt southward, the river of Damascus northward, or rather the river Euphrates eastward, *Gen. xv. 18.* Nebuchadnezzar's greatness is represented by a flourishing tree, *Dan. iv. 10, 21.* But it is observable here concerning this vine, that it is praised for its shadow, its boughs and its branches, but not a word of its fruit, for *Israel was an empty vine*, *Hos. x. 1.* God came looking for grapes, but behold wild grapes, *Isa. v. 2.* And if a vine do not bring forth fruit, no tree so useless, so worthless, *Ezek. xv. 2—6.*

3. How it was wasted and ruined, (1.) Lord, thou hast done great things for this vine, and why shall it be all undone again? If it were a plant not of God's planting, it were not strange to see it rooted up: but shall God desert and abandon that which he himself gave being to? *ver. 12.* Why hast thou then broken down her hedges? There was a good reason for this change in God's way towards them; this noble vine was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, *Jer. ii. 21.* to the reproach of its great owner, and then no marvel if he took away its hedge, *Isa. v. 5.* yet God's former favours to this vine are urged as pleas in prayer to God, and improved as encouragements to faith, that for all this God would not wholly cast them off. Observe, (1.) The malice and enmity of the gentile nations against Israel; as soon as ever God broke down their hedges and left them exposed, troops of enemies presently broke in upon them, that waited for an opportunity to destroy them. They that passed by the way had a pluck at them; the boar out of the wood, and the wild beast of the field were ready to ravage it, *ver. 13.*

But (2.) See also the restraint which these cruel enemies were under, for till God had broken down their hedges they could not pluck a leaf of this vine; the devil could not hurt Job, so long as God continued the hedge round about him, *Job i. 10.* See how much it is the interest of any people to keep themselves in the favour of God, and then they need not fear any wild beast of the field, (*Job v. 23.*) But if we provoke God to withdraw, our defence is departed from us, and we are undone. The deplorable state of Israel is described where, *ver. 16.* It is burnt by fire, it is cut down; the people are treated like thorns and briers, that are nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned, and no longer like vines that are protected and cherished, they perish not through the rage of the wild beast and the boar, but at the rebuke of thy countenance; that was it which they dreaded, and to which they attributed all their calamities. It is well or ill with us according as we are under God's smiles or frowns.

4. What their requests were to God hereupon.

1. That God would help the vine; *ver. 14, 15.* that he would graciously take cognizance of its case, and do for it as he thought fit. *Return, we beseech thee, O Lord of hosts*, for thou hast seemed to go away from us. *Look down from heaven*, to which thou hast retired; from heaven, that place of prospect, whence thou seest all the wrongs that are done us; that place of power, whence thou canst send effectual relief; from heaven, where thou hast prepared thy throne of judgment, to which we appeal; and where thou hast prepared a better country for those that are Israelites indeed; thence give a gracious look, thence make a gracious visit to this vine. Take our woeful condition into thy compassionate consideration, and for the particular fruits of thy pity we refer ourselves to thee. Only behold the vineyard, or rather the root, which thy right hand hath planted, and which therefore we hope thy right hand will protect; that branch which thou madest strong for thyself, to show forth thy praise, *Isa. xliii. 21.* that with the fruit of it thou mightest be honoured. Lord, it is formed by thyself, and for thyself, and therefore it may with an humble confidence be committed to thyself and to thine own care; *As for God, his work is perfect.* What we read the branch, in the Hebrew is the Son (*Ben*) whom in thy counsel thou hast made strong for thyself. That branch was to come out of the stock of Israel, *My servant the Branch*, *Zech. iii. 8.* And therefore till he was come, Israel in general, and the house of David in particular, must be preserved and upheld, and kept in being: *He is the true vine*, *John xv. 1.* *Isa. xi. Destroy it not, for that a blessing is in it*, *Isa. lxxv. 8.*

2. That he would help the vine-dresser, *ver. 17, 18.* Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand; the king (whoever it was) of the house of David, that was now to go in and out before them; let thy hand be upon him, not only to protect and cover him, but to own him, and strengthen him, and give him success. We have this phrase, *Ezra vii. 28.* And *was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me.* Their king is called the man of God's right hand, as he was the representative of their state, which was dear to God, as his Benjamin, the son of his right hand; and as he was president in their affairs, and an instrument in God's right hand of much good to them, defending them from themselves and from their enemies, and directing them in the right way; and under-shepherd under him who was the great shepherd of Israel. Princes that have power must remember that they are sons of men, of Adam, so the word is; that if they are strong, it is God that hath made them strong, and he has made them so for himself, for they are his ministers to serve the interests of his kingdom among men; which if they do in sincerity, his hand shall be upon them; and we should pray in faith that it may be so, adding this promise, that if God will adhere to our governors, we will adhere to him, *so will not we go back from thee*; we will never desert a cause which we see that God espouseth, and is the patron of. Let God be our leader, and we will follow him. Adding also this prayer, quicken us, put life into us, revive our dying interests, revive our drooping spirits, and then *we will call upon thy name.* We will continue to do so upon all occasions, having found it not in vain to do so. We cannot call upon God's name in a right manner, unless he quicken us; but it is he puts life into our souls, that puts liveliness into our prayers.

But many interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, apply this to the Messiah, the Son of David, the protector and Saviour of the church, and the keeper of the vineyard. (1.) He is the man of God's right hand, to whom he hath sworn by his right hand (so the Chaldee); who he has exalted to his right hand, and who is indeed his right hand, the arm of the Lord, for all power is given to him. (2.) He is that son of man whom he made strong for himself, for the glorifying of his name, and the advancing of the interests of his kingdom among men. (3.) God's hand is upon him throughout his whole undertaking, to hear him out and carry him on, to protect and animate him, that the good pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand. (4.) The stability and constancy of believers is entirely owing to that grace and strength which is laid up for us in Jesus Christ, *Pfalm lxxviii. 28.* In him is our strength found, by which we are enabled to persevere to the end: Let thy hand be upon him, on him let our help be laid, who is mighty, let him be made able to save to the uttermost, and that will be our security, *So will not we go back from thee.*

Lastly, The psalm concludes with the same petition that had been put up twice before, and yet it is no vain repetition, *ver. 19. Turn us again.* The title given to God rises, *ver. 3. O God; ver. 7. O God of hosts; ver. 19. O Lord (Jehovah) God of hosts.* When we come to God for his grace, his good will towards us, and his good work in us, we should pray earnestly, continue instant in prayer, and pray more earnestly.

P S A L M LXXXI.

This psalm was penned, as is supposed, not upon occasion of any particular providence, but for the solemnity of a particular ordinance, either that of the new-moon in general, or that of the feast of trumpets, on the new-moon of the seventh month, *Lev. xxiii. 24.* Numb. xxix. 1. When David by the Spirit, introduced the singing of psalms into the temple-service, this psalm was intended for that day, to excite and assist the proper devotions of it. All the psalms are profitable; but if one psalm be more suitable than another to the day and the observances of it, we should choose that. The two great intentions of our religious assemblies, and which we ought to have in our eye in our attendance on them, are answered in this psalm, which are to give glory to God, and to receive instruction from God; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple: Accordingly, by this psalm, we are assisted on our solemn feast-days, (1.) In praising God, for what he is to his people, *ver. 1—3.* and has done for them, *ver. 4—7.* (2.) In teaching and admonishing one another concerning the obligations we lie under to God, *ver. 8—10.* The danger of revolting from him, *ver. 11, 12.* And the happiness we should have if we would but keep close to him, *ver. 13—16.* This, though speaking primarily of Israel of old, is written for our learning, and is therefore to be sung with application.